Center for Educational Innovation - Public Education Association

Recreating Public Schools

Guide to Restructuring Large Schools Into Smaller Learning Communities

Lead Researcher:
Daniel Haifetz

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Foreword

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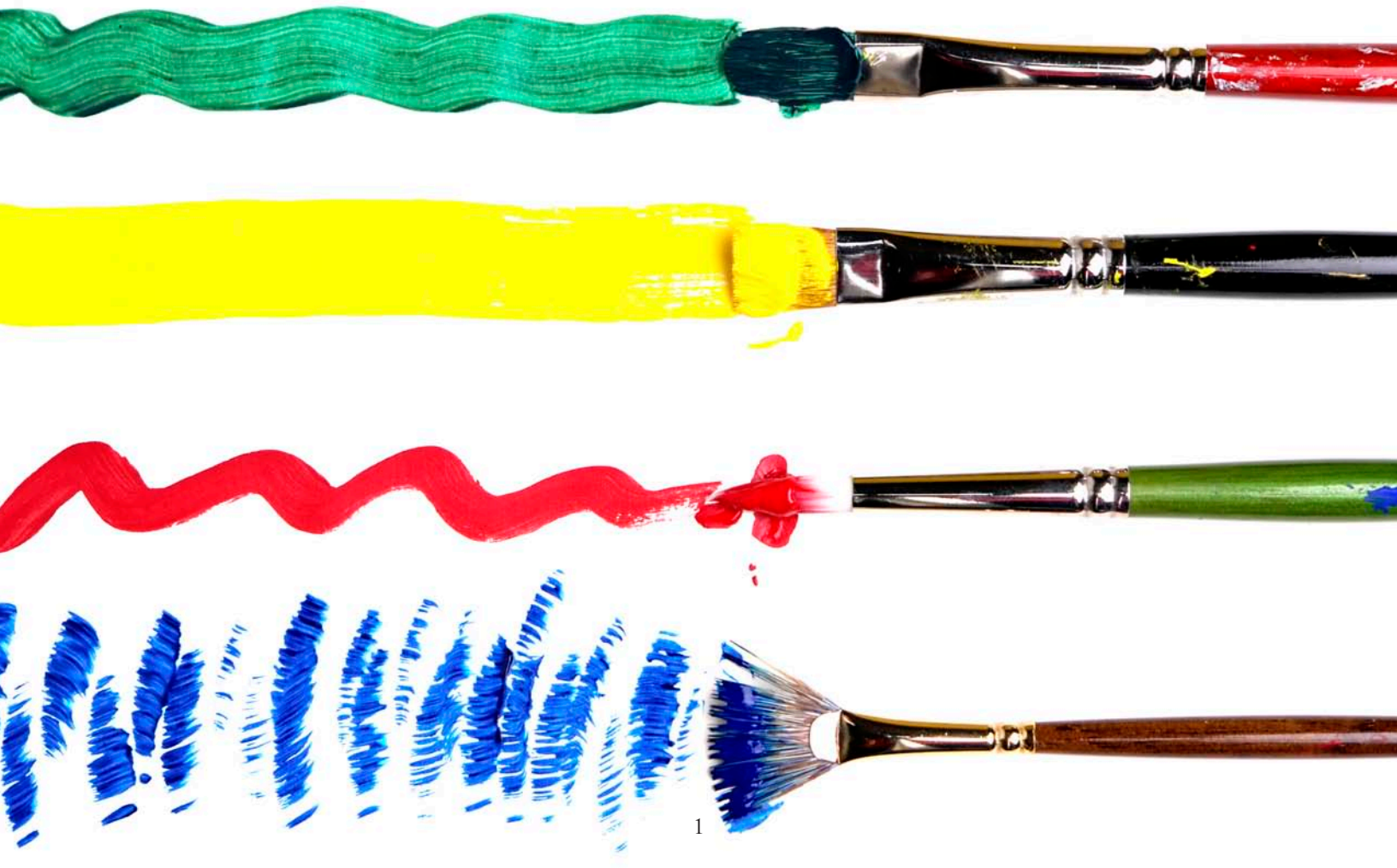
- Sy Fliegel



Foreword: A History of School Restructuring

About three decades ago, several of us found ourselves in East Harlem's District 4 working at varying levels—teachers, principals, deputy superintendents, superintendent—and all asking ourselves the same question: What could be done to make the schools better? For it was clear to us that the schools couldn't get much worse. At the time, District 4 ranked at the bottom of the 32 community school districts in terms of student outcomes. We were in the fortunate position of having nothing to lose and everything to gain. And this freed us up to take bold, new approaches to education, including radically transforming the schools themselves.

By the time that we arrived in East Harlem, the district—like most around the city—had become a set of large schools where thousands of children attended one complex and moved through the classes and grades like so many parts on an assembly line. The schools had become alienating places designed to inhibit teachers, students, parents and school leaders from getting to know one another, let alone working together to improve education. They were lonely places where students too frequently "fell through the cracks" simply because no one noticed they were at risk.

So, those of us who were asking the question of how to improve the schools turned the large, impersonal schools into small, alternative concept schools where everyone knew everyone else and was deeply committed to improving the educational outcomes.

The answer to the enormous problems within the schools—extremely high drop out rates, low attendance rates, high incidents of violence, low student performance—we believed was based in the design of the school itself. So, those of us who were asking the question of how to improve the schools turned the large, impersonal schools into small, alternative concept schools where everyone knew everyone else and was deeply committed to improving the educational outcomes.

We began working with principals and teachers to break down the large schools into sets of smaller learning communities. The result was schools that provided theme-based learning opportunities for students. These small schools then began to "compete" against one another for enrollment by engaging in a school choice process that required students to apply to schools and go through an admissions process. The best schools rose to the top and quickly had more applicants than seats, while the poor schools fell to the bottom and were forced to improve their educational programs or close down.

The result of this district-wide endeavor could be seen eight years after the initiative started when the district rose to the middle of the 32 community school districts in terms of student outcome data.

By the end of the 1980s, the core concept of the East Harlem initiative—that smaller is better when it comes to school size and education—had permeated the New York City public schools as well as other major urban school systems. It was at this time that several of us who had worked in East Harlem came together at the Center for Educational Innovation (CEI) to provide technical assistance to those schools and systems interested in turning this concept into reality. In the mid-1990s CEI became a partner in the Annenberg Challenge in New York City, an initiative aimed at creating 100 new small schools and bringing them together in networks to foster collaboration and healthy competition. Within this program, CEI helped restructure dozens of large middle schools into sets of smaller learning communities, thus dramatically increasing the number of quality, small public schools available to New York City's students.

Among the schools we helped restructure through the Annenberg Challenge were all of the middle schools in Brooklyn's District 20. We began by working with eight large middle schools and ended with 24 smaller learning communities, thus tripling the number of educational options for students, and dramatically increasing student performance. By 2002, the district was outperforming the citywide averages on standardized tests. For example, the percentage of students meeting the standards on 8th grade English and Math tests in 2002 was consistently above the citywide average (ranging from +12% on the State ELA test to +26% on the State Math test).

In 2000, CEI merged with the Public Education Association (PEA) to become CEI-PEA. CEI-PEA has had the privilege to help create some of the country's most successful schools, including KIPP Academy, Frederick Douglass Academy, Manhattan East, Manhatttan Center for Science and Mathematics, the Young Women's Leadership School, Wildcat Academy, and the Gilder Lehrman Academy of American Studies. These schools have served as models for other schools across the country and around the world. Today, there are 55 KIPP Academies across the United States; the Young Women's Leadership School has inspired girls' schools across the nation; the Gilder Lehrman Academy of American Studies is the model for history-themed schools in over 30 states; and the John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy has been replicated in five high schools in Chile aimed at serving the most at-risk students. CEI-PEA is currently involved in reforming the school system in the state of Israel as well.

These decades of experience in school creation and redesign have provided CEI-PEA with a wealth of knowledge about what works and what doesn't work in terms of school restructuring. For example, we know that establishing "buy in" to the process at the outset is critical. We also know that any kind of "top-down" or punitive model for restructuring may create a jolt of improvement, but will ultimately fail unless the school community comes to own the reforms. Too often we see school systems "placing" small learning communities within large school buildings that have available space. These small learning communities become aliens within the school culture and community. In short, we know that while in general smaller can be better, it is only better when the school community owns the process that creates such smaller learning communities.

It is for this reason that we have decided to create this "guide" to school restructuring. The guide is built upon the experiences of CEI-PEA Senior Fellow John Falco, his outstanding team of educators and consultants, and the schools with whom they work. Our goal is to provide information to individuals and groups interested in this school restructuring process, from teachers and school leaders to parents and community members to school system leaders, funders and policy makers. The guide is not an "off the rack" reform model. Rather, it should be used as a tool to help inform school restructuring efforts that are customized for specific educational communities.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the people who have helped make this guide possible. First and foremost, thank you to everyone at the Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII), United States Department of Education. CEI-PEA developed this guide as part of a three-year initiative supported by the OII. Both the financial and intellectual resources provided through this office have been immensely helpful. Special thanks go to Stacy Kreppel and Kelly O'Donnell who provided excellent commentary and suggestions to earlier drafts of this document.

We hope that this guide helps you achieve your goals for public education. For more information about school restructuring or the other intiatives of CEI-PEA, please contact our offices at 212-302-8800.

Sy Fliegel

President & Gilder Senior Fellow

CEI-PEA

What is School Restructuring?

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School restructuring is a process of reform that attempts to reconcile idealistic aspirations of educators with the realities of large public schools. While most educators have high expectations for their students, the impersonal structure of public schools is an obstacle to achieving these goals. In order to be effective, teachers must know the students in their school and must be able to identify their students' needs and take actions to meet them. If schools are to be effective, they must have a sense of community, clarity of purpose, and a curriculum that engages students.

The CEI-PEA school restructuring process is designed to help large public schools become more effective. Through the strategy, schools transform from large institutions into several smaller learning communities (SLCs), each housed in the original building. It is a process that re-energizes the entire learning environment by taking all of the physical resources that already exist in a public school (people and the building itself) and all the intangibles (ideas, time and relationships) and re-arranging them, freeing up the energy and creativity that is latent in teachers, administrators and students. In the process, a school assesses its strengths and weaknesses, maintaining the strengths and innovating to fix the weaknesses.

The differences produced through the CEI-PEA school restructuring process are evident in everything from the physical environment of the school to the curriculum to the admissions process. For example, near the entrance of a school that has been restructured into SLCs, one usually finds a sign listing the multiple SLCs housed within the building. Each SLC often has a theme, which though it does not replace the traditional core curriculum, adds a specific flavor to each SLC. Every student applies for entry into a specific SLC, which becomes his or her home for the years that he or she attends the school. Often, each SLC is located on a separate floor so that student movement is kept to a minimum. The randomness of large schools is replaced by students feeling a sense of cohesion, of belonging to a community. Even bulletin boards with student work reflect each SLC's theme and promote a sense of cohesion and purpose.

This guide is intended to give a sense of what restructuring entails. It relies heavily on the experiences of experts who have led the process in their own schools. The process is divided into five phases, which span the course of two to three years, with all succeeding years devoted to assessment and improvement. This is by no means a standardized model, but a collection of practices which any educator may find useful.

From Big to Small - Transformations in Restructured Schools

Large Traditional Schools	Restructured Schools
One Large School	Set of Smaller Learning Communities
One-size-fits-all Learning Model	Individualized Learning Models
Impersonal Environment	Cohesive Community
General Curriculum	Theme-based Curriculum
Alienating to students, teachers and parents	Engaging to students, teachers and parents

Frequently Asked Questions

Is school restructuring just a fad?

Is school restructuring a punitive measure of No Child Left Behind?

Is school restructuring a one-size-fits-all, top-down model?

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Is school restructuring just a fad?

School restructuring grows out of the small schools movement, which has been central to school reform since the 1970s and has demonstrated that smaller learning communities (SLCs) help lead to student improvement.[1] Research on best practices in SLCs shows that SLCs are frequently able to outperform larger schools because in SLCs leaders are better able to fashion curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of students, and small schools are able to establish a strong sense of community that enrich relationships among students, teachers and parents. Restructuring often results in a more immediate and personal form of accountability.[2]

However, simply reducing school size alone will not improve teaching and learning.[3] It is with this knowledge that CEI-PEA has crafted a school restructuring process that moves beyond simply reducing the size of the learning communities. The CEI-PEA process helps schools integrate all aspects of the educational environment into the restructuring plan: curriculum, instruction, parent and community engagement, professional development, resources, enrichment, partnerships, and more. In short, the CEI-PEA school restructuring process takes the lessons learned from more than three decades of school reform and uses them to help schools generate holistic, successful school restructuring plans.

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Is school restructuring a punitive measure of the No Child Left Behind Act?

For many educators, all they know of school restructuring is its connection with No Child Left Behind's accountability measures for schools. While school restructuring may be prompted by a school's failure to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets, the restructuring process should not be initiated as a "punishment" but as an "opportunity." In fact, many of the schools that CEI-PEA has helped restructure have been able to meet AYP, but want to accomplish much greater outcomes. This fact underscores a key to restructuring and to education reform in general: schools are always in need of improvement, and restructuring is a flexible method school leaders can self-impose to accelerate progress.

Is school restructuring a one-size-fits-all, top-down model?

CEI-PEA's philosophy of restructuring runs counter to the top-down model of education reform:

- School restructuring is bottom-up. The CEI-PEA school restructuring process is created, developed and implemented by the members of the school community. The school community must "own" the process, and CEI-PEA operates as a support to that process. While local or state leaders may encourage or prompt the process, the actual process must be initiated and carried out by the school itself. Otherwise, the restructuring will be meaningless because the community will not be accountable for it.
- School restructuring is built to last. Well aware that the initial momentum of any whole school reform can drop off and stall, CEI-PEA emphasizes capacity-building, making the school the center and driving force of change. This model asks all members of the school community to take ownership of the school, and advises school leaders on how to involve all staff members.
- Innovation is a continuous process. Restructuring does not end when the building re-opens with a set of SLCs. In fact, some of the most powerful and innovative work begins after the launch of

the restructured school—from developing interdisciplinary learning to integrating themes across the curriculum to generating meaningful parent involvement. In order to support this ongoing work, CEI-PEA encourages schools to join CEI-PEA's School Network, a consortium of school leaders who share innovative practices and form a support network. This network serves as a vehicle for peer reviews, sharing of best practices, resources sharing, and collective problem-solving.

Can restructuring be coordinated with other school reforms?

The CEI-PEA school restructuring process is not a replacement for other effective school reforms. Rather, it is a strategy by which to help schools make better use of other school reforms by integrating them into the vision, goals and themes of the restructured school. For example, as part of the restructuring process, school staff must perform a comprehensive assessment of student needs, which helps guide the selection of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) programs and align other reform initiatives present in or available to the school.

Operating multiple school reform programs simultaneously within a school can lead to incoherent programming, curriculum and instruction. The CEI-PEA restructuring process helps schools avoid having an ineffective patchwork of reforms. Instead, they are able to align programs with the vision, goals and themes of the school.

Who is involved in school restructurng?

The entire school community should be involved in the restructuring process in order to ensure that all of the stakeholders' interests and needs are addressed. At the beginning of the process, a planning team is assembled, and it can be comprised of teachers, school leaders, parents, students, school aides, custodial staff and school partners such as representatives from local community-based organizations who assist with programming. Throughout the process, teachers, parents and students are surveyed, and CEI-PEA helps schools make presentations on the restructuring plans at PTA meetings, staff meetings and other appropriate settings. The entire process is designed to gain "buy in" of all stakeholders so that the restructuring is a success. For, if the entire school community does not own the process, they will not contribute fully to its success.

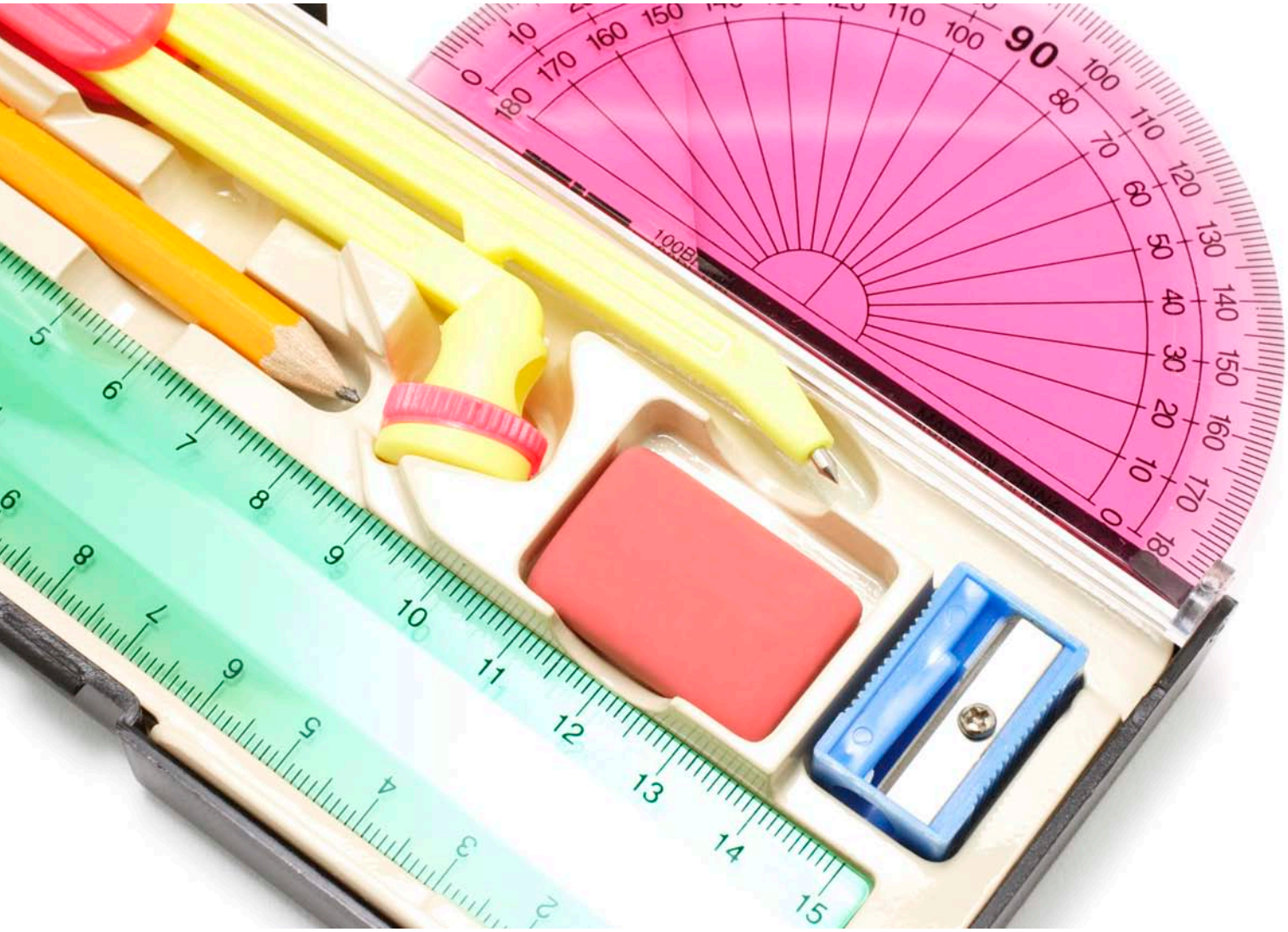
Is the principal still in charge in a restructured school?

The school principal remains the main policy and decision-maker in a restructured school. However, the roles of the assistant principals, instructional team leaders and teachers are all shifted such that a restructured school encourages leadership at all levels. A four-tier leadership system is established in which policy and decision-making flows from the principal down to staff, with feedback and input flowing up from staff to the principal.

How long does it take to restructure a school?

The process usually takes two to three years, but can be moved ahead more quickly or slowed down based on the preparedness of the school community.

The Restructuring Process



Phase 1: Establishing Relationships

Phase 2: Creating a Plan Together

Phase 3: Preparing for the Launch

Phase 4: Launching the Restructured School

Phase 5: Ongoing Improvement & Accountability

The CEI-PEA Restructuring Process

Based on CEI-PEA's experience working with schools across New York City and other municipalities around the country, CEI-PEA has developed a five-phase process for restructuring a school. The process usually encompasses two to three years, but can be moved ahead more or less quickly depending upon the needs of the school community.

Phase 1: Establishing Relationships

The first phase of the school restructuring process helps school leaders establish strong relationships within the school community—relationships that will form the foundation for the restructuring process. The process begins by helping the school leader determine his or her purpose for restructuring the school. For, if the principal is not clear about the purpose, he or she will have an extremely difficult time building consensus for the initiative.

While the process can be introduced at any level—staff, principal, superintendent—the key to school restructuring is that the whole school community makes the decision to initiate the process in order to bring their students the best possible education.

Taking the Lead: The Principal's Role in Initiating Restructuring

Different schools restructure for different reasons and at different points. Some principals initiate the process because they are not satisfied with the status quo. Others fear that slipping test scores will lead the school to missing AYP targets. In some cases the school has already been missing AYP targets and restructuring is now required. In all cases, it is the goal of meeting the needs of students that should propel schools to restructure. And while the process can be introduced at any level—staff, principal, superintendent—the key to school restructuring is that the whole school community makes the decision to initiate the process in order to bring their students the best possible education.

Two stories about initiating the process of restructuring can provide insight. M.S. 72 in Queens, New York, had been, according to Principal Chandra Williams, "failing for eight years." M.S. 72 didn't have the challenging discipline problems of a large, low-functioning middle school; rather, the problem was that the value of academic rigor had never been instilled in the students. When New York State mandated M.S. 72 to restructure, Chandra Williams took over. Williams came to M.S. 72 from an educational program where students had been enormously successful. What made her prior program one of the most successful in the city were the close relationships that teachers formed with the students. In a place where students were given the proper interventions and teachers knew what problem each student was coming in with every day, Williams explains that "students made three years of gains in one year."

It was with the knowledge that small works best that Williams looked upon restructuring as an opportunity to breathe life into M.S. 72. The results have been dramatic. In the first two years of restructuring, the school achieved dramatic gains in student outcomes: 22.5% increase in students meeting standards on the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) test and a 12.1% increase in students meeting standards on the New York State Math test. During the same period, the number of students performing far below the standards decreased, with a 4.4% drop in students performing far below the standard on the ELA test and a 12.3% drop in students performing far below the standard on the State Math test. In 2005, M.S. 72 was named one of two model middle schools in New York City by the Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning.

Alan Borer came to school restructuring from a different set of experiences. He was serving as an assistant principal at the prestigious Bronx High School of Science when he learned that only 90 of the incoming 800 freshman were from the Bronx. Astounded by this, he then jumped at the opportunity to become principal at M.S. 142, a Bronx middle school on the Mayor's Priority List to improve school safety. He was determined to help students at M.S. 142 achieve at the level required for admission to a highly selective high school such as Bronx Science.

He faced an uphill battle against a school culture that had internalized chronic failure. Upon arriving as the school's fourth principal in eight years, Borer found a school that relied on disciplining students through

exclusionary practices—denying them trips, dances, good grades, etc. The first thing he did was take down any sign that had the word “no” on it. He used restructuring as a tool to get the staff to focus on a “positive ethos” of “celebrating success.” Since the school restructured, students “no longer run the school,” explains Borer. From 2004 to 2005, the number of suspensions dropped from 128 to 31, indicating the broader shift in culture that has taken place at the school. Changing the culture from one that focused on student discipline to one that focused on student learning was the first critical step for this school.

These two examples illustrate that restructuring grants a new beginning to schools whose problems can run the gamut from violence to low academic rigor to staff apathy and more. Even the most advantaged schools often need a “new beginning.”

Engaging the Staff

Once a principal has decided to restructure, he or she introduces the idea to the staff. Presenting the idea to the staff must begin as a conversation about the school’s goals and obstacles to achieving those goals. The most critical aspect of this phase is generating staff “buy in,” and this should be the first order of business for the principal and other school leaders. The key component to successful restructuring is the people behind it, those who feel that the school community’s mission is their own. When this school-wide commitment falters or never takes off, positive changes are unlikely to last.

Initial resistance to the idea is typical, as change is usually perceived as threatening. While the next section addresses this challenge more fully, it is important to note that adversaries often become great allies, even champions for the restructuring process once they are able to contribute to the process. Creating “buy in” from these individuals as well as those who immediately support the concept can be accomplished through three main strategies:

1. Presentations by Successfully Restructured Schools - Principals and staff of successfully restructured schools are the greatest spokespersons for the process. It is beneficial to hold several open forums for staff members to hear from leaders and staff of other restructured schools. The forums should allow for both a presentation by the other school’s representatives as well as group question and answer session and an informal period when individuals from both schools can speak one-on-one.

2. Visits to Successfully Restructured Schools - Once the staff hears about restructuring they will want to see what a restructured school looks like. Principals should lead the planning team on visits to successfully restructured schools. These examples can inspire the staff by providing models and points of contrast. Ultimately, these visits will also provide staff with a common vocabulary for restructuring, and encourage them to begin envisioning the goals for their own restructuring process.

3. Literature on Restructured Schools - In addition to this guidebook, CEI-PEA can provide school leaders with an array of literature on restructured schools, including PowerPoint summaries of the process, case studies of successful restructurings that include student outcome data, newsletters addressed to parents on the benefits of restructuring, sample school packets used by restructured schools in the recruitment and admissions process for students, and other materials generated by members of the CEI-PEA School Network. Visit CEI-PEA’s website for sample materials at www.cei-pea.org.

Phase 2: Creating a Plan Together

The next phase in the process takes restructuring from an intention to a conceptual and physical framework. The first step is to establish a school-wide planning team, which will create the framework and design the culture of the restructured school. The planning team acts as a sort of think tank, pooling representatives from the school community, inviting their brightest insights, highest hopes, and knowledge of the current problems.

Selecting the Planning Team

The planning team drives the process on both the creative and implementation levels. This group serves as turn-keys for the process, and in many cases, these individuals lead the process on the ground level. Many future leaders arise out of the team.

After the principal introduces the idea of restructuring to the staff, teachers apply for positions on the planning team. The planning team must be fully representative of the school's staff but should be limited in size (around fifteen people) so that meetings are manageable and maintain a clear focus. It should include, but not be limited to:

- Principal
- All supervisors and assistant principals
- Teachers' union representative
- Parents' association president and at least 2 other parents
- Supervising school aide
- Custodian as need arises to address structural items and facilities issues
- Cross-section of teaching staff to include variations in years of service, experience, subject areas, etc.

Forming the planning team is a great way for school leaders to bring together the best ideas and top practitioners towards the common purpose of restructuring the school. However, selecting the team is always difficult for a principal, as many valuable voices are excluded. This is why principals should regularly hold staff meetings where the planning team and staff can have a productive exchange of ideas and concerns. Principals should keep the following criteria in mind when selecting the committee:

- People who have the potential to promote buy-in from non-committee staff
- People who represent a crucial cross-section of the school community
- At least one person who represents the voice of restructuring critics
- Staff who have great potential to be future leaders.

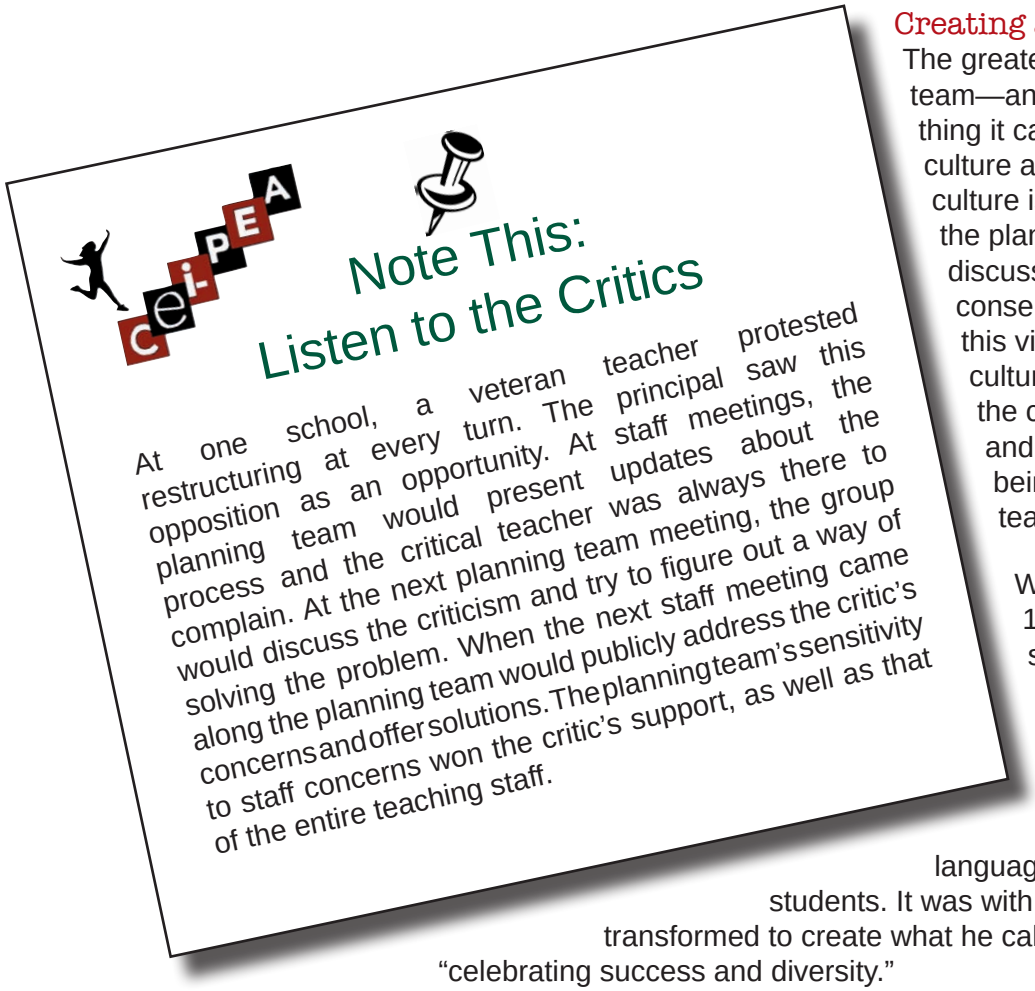
Holding the First Meeting

When the planning team convenes for the first time, members should discuss their goals for the school and the steps that they need to take to achieve those goals. This conversation keeps the committee focused on restructuring as a way of actually achieving what seems impossible. It may be helpful to invite the principal from a successfully restructured school to share his or her experiences and respond to questions and concerns of the planning team. Minutes from the meeting should be posted in the faculty lounge or other appropriate locations so that the process is transparent to the entire school community from the outset.

Surveying Staff

Restructuring is a school-wide process, and staff surveys of interests and concerns are great tools to help ensure inclusiveness. As the planning team is constructing the new school's identity, they should construct a survey that allows all staff members to articulate their goals for students, outline components

of a “dream school” and identify steps to achieve those goals. After the planning team analyzes these surveys, there needs to be follow-through, in which the staff’s concerns are integrated into the framework of the restructured school. In turn, the planning team brings updates back to the staff. The purpose of this continuous loop of information is well put by Chandra Williams, principal of a restructured school: “When you let the staff know you are integrating their input, they recognize that ‘yes, people are listening.’”



Creating a New Culture

The greatest challenge facing a planning team—and the single most important thing it can do—is to create a new school culture and identity. Creating a new culture is thus the first major work of the planning team. It springs from their discussions about shared vision and consensus about the impediments to this vision. To create a new school culture, the staff must characterize the current school tone and culture, and ask themselves: “Who’s being served: the students or the teachers?”

When Alan Borer came to M.S. 142 in the Bronx, New York, he saw a school characterized by exclusionary practices, where students weren’t inspired. In this scenario, the school tolerated disenfranchisement of special needs groups like the English language learners and special education students. It was with this knowledge that M.S. 142 transformed to create what he calls a positive “ethos”—an ethos of “celebrating success and diversity.”

Creating a new culture at M.S. 72 began with serious self-reflection by the staff. Teachers were asked to rate the school, revealing that many ranked the school as being mediocre. They then began questioning how they serve the highest-need students—those performing below grade level on standardized tests. The staff had to face the fact that they approached these students with low expectations. Against this backdrop of a culture that had not been responding to the specific needs of students, M.S. 72 fashioned a curriculum and school culture. The principal explains that the school now engages students “where they are and for what they need.” This new culture led the school to break with the practice of using one comprehensive school reform model (CSR) for the whole school, and instead adopting a second CSR to reach higher-need students. By responding to specific student needs, the staff aims to improve outcomes for all students.

Standing on Common Ground

By the end of this phase, the school community should be clear about what restructuring actually is. They should have both a frame of reference for what is being done in the field and a framework for restructuring their school. More importantly, a dialogue will have begun that will lead all stakeholders to consensus about the school’s goals. The spirit of a new school is thus born when a staff begins to think that their mutual aspirations for the school are possible.

Phase 3: Preparing for the Launch

Now that the planning team has created a conceptual skeleton of a new school, they must add flesh and bones to it. The third phase of restructuring begins with designing a physical plan for the smaller learning communities (SLCs), then moves on to creating "themes" that will enrich the academic life of each SLC. The last step in this phase is attracting students to the newly restructured school. Altogether, this phase requires intensive planning, and like previous phases, should involve as much of the staff as possible.

Designing the Physical Space

Moving from vision to reality requires a serious analysis of a school's physical layout. Physical space as well as curricular and instructional goals help determine the number of SLCs and if the SLCs will be organized by theme or grade level. If organized by theme, then the school will restructure "vertically," meaning that all grade levels will be represented within each SLC. In a vertically structured school, students remain within one SLC during the entire time they attend the school. If the school organizes by grade level, then the school will restructure "horizontally," meaning that each grade level will constitute a separate theme-based SLC. In a horizontally structured school, students move through the SLCs as they move through the grades.

Choosing between vertical and horizontal orientations of a restructured school depends greatly on the agreed upon goals of the school community. Some schools may value a small, close-knit environment over intensely unified academic departments, and vice versa. Others may value exploration of different themes over the close study of a single theme. Still others may strive to create a blend of the two approaches. Following are descriptions of the various approaches and the benefits of each.

1. Vertical Orientation

Most restructured schools that CEI-PEA works with are oriented vertically, meaning each SLC is multi-grade. For example, in a middle school with three SLCs, each learning community will have a mix of sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. The major advantage of vertical orientation is that each SLC becomes more autonomous and self-contained, where students are in close, intimate contact with all of their teachers from the day they enter the SLC. These SLCs are "mini-schools" where students are engaged with the theme of the SLC for several years. CEI-PEA highly recommends the vertical approach to restructuring as it maximizes the benefits of smaller learning communities.

In many restructured middle schools, sixth or seventh grade teachers will move up with their students in succeeding years, so that the work teachers and students do together is continued and built upon. Students in such schools often remark on the advantages of entering a school in sixth grade where they are in constant contact with the teachers they will have in seventh and eighth grades. In such SLCs, the anonymity gap is closed, and a community built around the identity of a theme takes hold.

2. Horizontal Orientation

There are also successful examples of horizontally-oriented schools, which retain single-age learning communities. This approach works well for schools that want change but still want to retain a strong school-wide identity. Also, many such schools don't want to disrupt the operations and initiatives of academic departments that are already successful. For example, schools with Comprehensive School Reform plans (CSRs) may place a higher premium on eighth grade teachers in its English department working together to develop implementation plans for this curriculum. The themes are less entrenched in such schools, the advantage being that every student in the school gets to explore all the themes the faculty has to offer.

3. Blended Orientation

Some schools blend the two approaches, making students' first year in the restructured school a single age "exploratory academy," and then having students choose from an array of vertically oriented SLCs for their remaining years.

Benefits of the three restructuring orientations
(Example: Middle School with grades 6, 7 & 8)

Orientation of Restructuring	SLC 1	SLC 2	SLC 3	Benefits
Vertical	All Grades	All Grades	All Grades	SLCs are more autonomous Teachers can move through the grade levels with students Instructional and interpersonal continuity
Horizontal	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	Retain strong school-wide identity Less disruptive to operations and academic departments Students get to explore all SLC themes
Blended	6th Grade Exploratory SLC	Grades 7 and 8	Grades 7 and 8	Allows entering students to explore the themes of the multi-grade SLCs Maintains strong academic departments in the first year of instruction

4. Know your Space

One of the most important elements in a planning team's choice between vertical and horizontal orientations is a study of the school's physical space. Before making a choice, the team should make an architectural map of the school building, marking all space to be shared by the whole school, the different sizes of classrooms, and all doors, staircases and other physical structures that can serve as physical divisions between different SLCs. Teachers should tour the building, writing down observations that give detail to the architectural map. Then the planning team should analyze the map and in sub-committees develop a plan for physically restructuring the school. Sharing these plans will help the planning team determine natural limits to their goals, while at the same time helping reveal hidden advantages.

SLC Themes and Staffing

Once the planning team settles on an orientation and architectural plan for the SLCs, it can proceed to make the personnel and academic choices that give the school character. This portion of the planning relies heavily on the leadership of the principal, as it requires delicate decision-making regarding the placement of teachers.

The planning team should carry out two simultaneous conversations as it determines the placement of teachers and selects themes for each SLC. The themes for the SLCs should emerge from the staff's interests and skills and the school's existing affiliations. Then teachers should be placed in SLCs with themes that mesh with their interests and talents. Staff surveys are key in gathering this information.

1. Themes

A survey of the staff's interests, hobbies, former careers, skills and previous areas of academic study creates a pool of themes from which the planning team can choose. Planning teams are always surprised by the hidden interests that arise from these surveys. Once a list of a couple of dozen themes, topics and issues is created, the planning team begins to create themes for the SLCs.

A good rule of thumb is to work with and develop the resources already present in the school. That can mean taking advantage of the staff's various talents, or by building on existing partnerships with community-based organizations or cultural institutions. For example, M.S. 142 in the Bronx, New York, is located next to a large nature reserve and waterfall. It is for this reason that the school chose to create a Health, Environment and Recreational Studies SLC. Using such existing affiliations and talents ensures that building the themes of the school will be easy, feasible and something to which teachers and students will feel connected.

The themes for each academy should be general enough that each core subject is able to develop thematic activities that are not too much of a stretch. For example, the theme of "technology" is more adaptable to social studies and English curriculum than is "computer engineering." Furthermore, a school should consider how the themes it chooses mesh with other school reforms that it may already have in place. The list below provides some sample SLC names, indicating potential themes:

- Academy of American Studies
- Academy of Environmental Studies
- Renaissance Academy
- School of Mathematic and Scientific Investigation
- School of Literary and Artistic Expression
- School of Journalism and Humanities
- Academy of Technology for Culture and Community
- Institute of Computer Publishing
- Academy of Computer Technology
- Academy of Future Technologies
- Academy of Science and Health Services
- Business School for Entrepreneurial Studies
- Institute for Law and Community Services.

2. Teacher Placement

The job of placing teachers in a restructured school requires strong leadership on behalf of the principal and sensitivity to the needs of individual teachers. In the survey of teacher interests, it is wise to ask which teachers they prefer to work with so that the planning team can build optimal instructional teams. Different principals give different weight to these preferences. Principal Chandra Williams believes it is crucial to place teachers within desired cohorts in order to build support for the restructuring process. Other principals use teachers' thematic interests as the primary determinant for placement within an SLC. Another element to decisions on teacher placement is matching teaching styles. Placement is thus highly strategic and determines how seriously an SLC will develop its theme and take on a unique pedagogical identity.

Marketing a Restructured School: Brochures, Recruitment and Uniforms

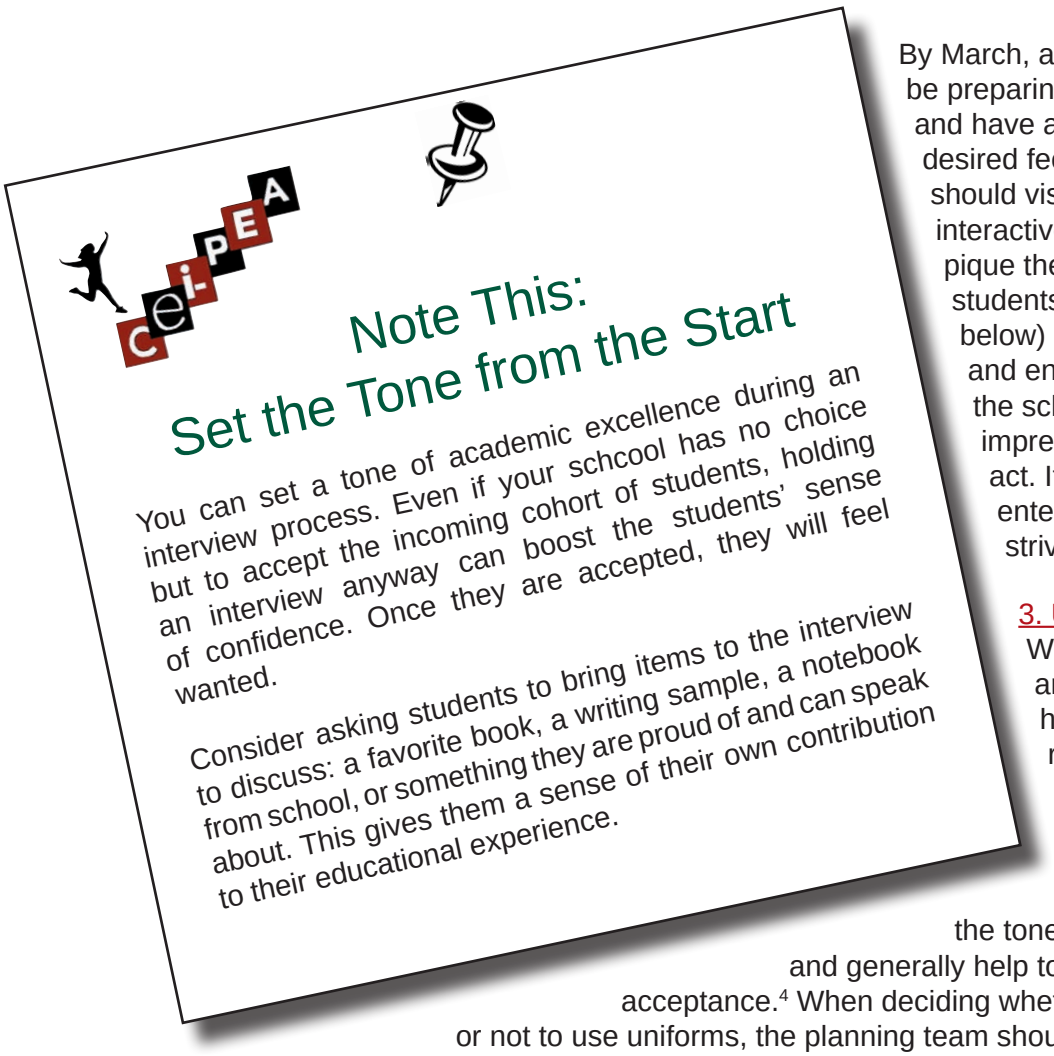
The planning team must go beyond the physical, conceptual and thematic planning of the restructured school in order to market the school to parents, students and feeder schools. An appealing "face" of a restructured school should not be underestimated. Parents and students take schools that project a strong image of success and a passion for educating students more seriously. They set a tone from the start that demands excellence. And they attract students who want to be there. This is a gesture that will bring the school profound returns in parental involvement and the performance of students.

1. Brochure

The school's brochure is the written sales pitch for the school. The planning team should make every effort to make the brochure as attention-grabbing as possible. Once the school has selected the themes for its SLCs, a brochure committee should be created with representatives from each SLC writing descriptions of the SLCs. The brochure should list potential thematic enrichment projects and, if possible, should discuss the cultural affiliations or community-based organizations with which the SLCs partner. Often, schools choose to close the brochure with inspirational quotes from educators or other role models.

2. Feeder School Recruitment

One of the most important things the planning team can do is develop a plan for recruiting students. School restructuring is premised on the value of choice—the notion that parents and students who choose the right educational environment for themselves will be more invested in that school. Going out to feeder schools with a dynamic presentation for parents and students will make your school a school of choice. Different schools have different objectives in this step. Some want to attract the highest performing students. Others place more value on finding the students, regardless of academic level, who are truly invested in the school's themes.



By March, a restructuring school should be preparing its recruitment presentation and have appointments to visit its most desired feeder schools. Dynamic teachers should visit classrooms, perhaps playing interactive games with students to pique their interest. Bring exceptional students to model the uniform (see below) and speak about the academic and enrichment opportunities at the school. The key is to make the impression that your school is a class act. If students believe that they are entering a top-notch school, they will strive to be top notch themselves.

3. Uniforms

When principals in urban schools are asked about the value of having a school uniform for a restructured school, the answer is almost inevitably the same: "the parents love it." Research has shown how school uniforms positively influence the tone of the school, reduce violence and generally help to cultivate an atmosphere of acceptance.[4] When deciding whether or not to use uniforms, the planning team should request suggestions and feedback from the staff and parents. If the school chooses to use uniforms, it should consider different colors for each SLC or a way of creating visible distinctions between the students of each SLC. Selecting a uniform early can help build support among the school community. When teachers and parents see students modeling the new school uniform, it makes restructuring a reality for them. This is an important symbolic step in creating a new school.

Phase 4: Launching the Restructured School

The first year of planning the school has finished, and now the newly restructured school is ready to launch. Launching the school is a year-long process. This section focuses on the key aspects that make launches successful: school leadership, thematic instruction, team teaching, healthy competition and youth development. In each case, the practices have been researched from some of the most successful restructured schools.

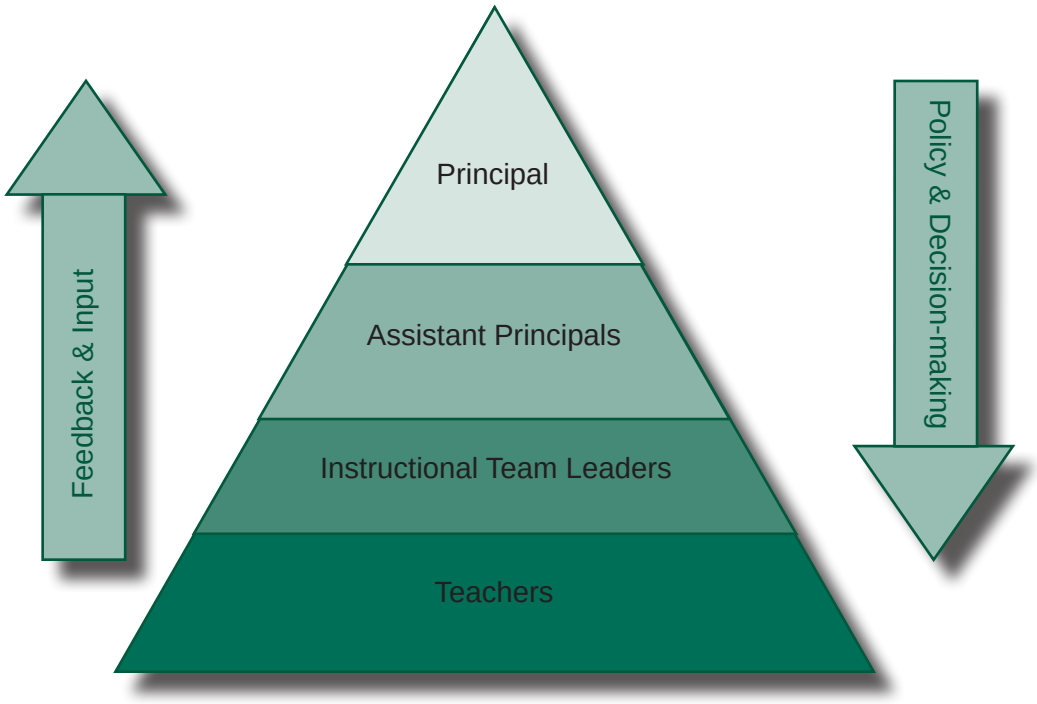
School Leadership

To have a truly successful school, leaders have to emerge on all different levels—principal, assistant principals, deans, and teachers. A great principal will allow the staff to lead themselves, but hold the staff accountable to achieving high standards. The advantage of such a model of leadership is that as the staff recognizes problems, they will feel empowered to take action to correct them.

By decentralizing administrative power away from one large school into several SLCs, more centers of power are created, as are more positions for leadership. Thus, a critical job at the outset of Phase 4 is to identify leaders. Often, school leaders emerge in the first phases of restructuring, making it easy for a principal to identify the right people. The next challenge is for the principal to establish three levels of leadership (principal, assistant principals, team leaders) and communicate the leadership structure to the school staff, encouraging teachers to become leaders as well through their instructional teams.

Leadership in a restructured school resembles a four-level pyramid, with power emerging from and flowing to every level. A new school practice may begin top-down, by a principal's orders to the staff. But after the teachers have implemented the policy, each team of teachers comes together as a group and gives feedback on the policy to their team leaders. Team leaders then meet with assistant principals or principals directly to give feedback. Thus, after a policy is introduced from the top, the feedback on this policy emerges from the bottom, and follows the flow upwards through the levels of leadership. Beyond having these structures in place, a restructured school must have routines for listening to the ground-level practitioners.

Communication & Power Flow
in a Restructured School



1. Assistant Principals

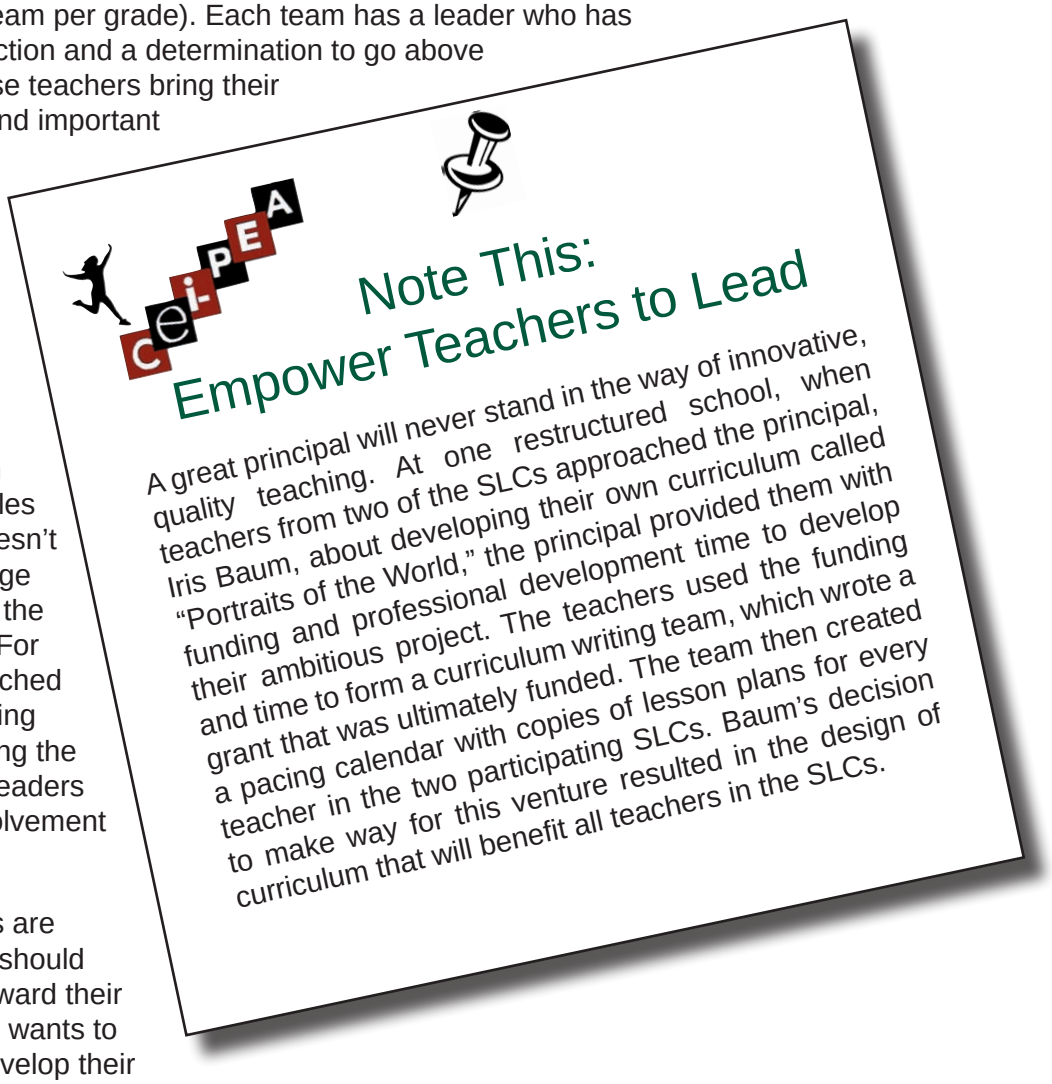
Assistant Principals (APs) assume the leadership role for each SLC. While the principal remains the chief of the school, managing the budget, directing the school-wide curriculum, making choices in staff and so on, each SLC requires a leader who takes responsibility for the SLC as a whole. The locus of curriculum and program leadership lies within the SLC. Therefore, it is imperative that assitant principals receive leadership develpment and support to prepare them to guide curriculum and instruction, roles that are not always part of the assistant principal's job in traditional public schools. The principal should work with the APs on such skills as conducting walk throughs and classroom observations. "Shadowing" the AP as he or she builds these skills is often helpful. The principal and APs should also meet regularly in order to review performance at each SLC. At these meetings, the principal can provide guidance on how to foster interdisciplinary instruction, work with teachers on building classroom management skills, and other elements for developing the educational programs at the SLCs.

2. SLC Instructional Team Leaders

A suggested method for creating fixed roles for teacher leaders is to divide the SLCs into teams of teachers (ideally, one team per grade). Each team has a leader who has demonstrated outstanding instruction and a determination to go above and beyond the call of duty. These teachers bring their insights, which become valued and important for making school-wide changes. Giving teachers specified leadership roles fosters self-sufficiency within the school.

Team leaders typically lead team meetings in peer professional development, classroom management and curriculum design. (The following section on "Team Teaching" details these roles in more depth.) Restructuring doesn't require master teachers to manage the SLC; rather, it provides them the space to do so if they so desire. For schools where there is an entrenched resistance to extra work, appointing team leaders is a matter of "getting the right people on the bus." These leaders can raise the bar for teacher involvement across the board.

Generally, hard-working teachers are rewarded with more work. SLCs should devise ways to recognize and reward their go-getters. If a group of teachers wants to start an after-school program, develop their own curriculum or initiate any extra-curricular activity, they should write a grant and budget some of the grant money for over-time (per session) pay.



Team Teaching:
Common Planning, Peer Professional Development & Behavioral Interventions

Rearranging the school into SLCs does not necessarily mean much will change in the quality of the relationships. Creating teams of teachers within each SLC, however, creates more positions for leadership and establishes a sense of community that can be instrumental in improving instruction and curriculum. This section outlines how teams of teachers can become a locus for improving education through common planning, peer professional development, and behavioral interventions.

1. Common Planning

The idea behind common planning is simple: give teachers time to collaborate on curriculum design. Teachers meet, map out their curriculum together, share in the burden of writing lessons, and then regroup to revise and augment each lesson. The advantage is profound: by spending time collaborating, teachers reduce the number of actual lessons they write, while improving the quality of each lesson. Here, the power of a restructured relationship is unleashed.

The practice differs between schools. In some schools teachers collaborate by subject, in others by department or by grade, and some schools combine all permutations. Ideally, teachers plan by subject area so that they are more efficiently writing lessons. This form of common planning also gives teachers a chance to meet outside of the SLC and thus break the insularity of a confining team. Common planning can also successfully be used for creating interdisciplinary units between subject areas by members of the same instructional team.

Common planning is not always an easy practice to implement in schools as teachers must balance competing demands both inside and outside the classroom, and common planning is often seen as one more demand on their time. However, there are simple strategies that a school leader can implement to change this perspective. For example, common planning was successfully implemented at one school when the administration made it voluntary and offered teachers the opportunity to gain coverage during the common planning time. This simple administrative change dramatically increased the number of teachers participating in common planning time: the entire staff signed up for common planning once they were able to get coverage to attend. In this case, the school directed more money to substitutes, but the tradeoff was worth it: teachers began to collaborate and talk about their craft.

2. Interdisciplinary Planning

Restructured schools are inherently interdisciplinary, so ensuring that such planning takes place and is effective is critical to the success of the school. Following are several steps a principal can take to introduce and foster interdisciplinary planning:

1. Break staff up into four groups.

2. Principal gives a presentation on an interdiscplinary lesson.

3. Each group develops a theme for a unit.

4. Each group brainstorms activities for their theme. Then they create lessons for this unit using several different kinds of graphic organizers.

5. Principal selects the four best group plans from the exercise, makes copies and distributes them to the entire staff.

6. Staff meet again and critique the models.

7. Repeat the process, only this time in new groups.

8. By the third time the staff goes through this process, they should be skilled in interdisciplinary planning.

3. Peer Professional Development

Instructional teams should take charge of their own professional development. Working in teams where there is time programmed for common planning blocks, teachers take charge of their own, informal professional development. Such informal professional development is focused on helping teachers get help to address their specific needs. Teachers are given a structured space to approach a colleague for ideas on how to teach a certain lesson, manage a unique behavioral problem, improve questioning techniques or model a lesson.

Initiating peer professional development requires both structures for partnerships and follow-through, as well as a shift in the staff's mindset. If an instructional team has bought into the idea, the team leader may begin the process. Usually, it begins during a common planning session devoted to professional development. Each teacher identifies his or her strengths and weaknesses, and singles out a specific skill he or she would like to develop. With a structure in place for monitoring follow through (see figure below), the team leader pairs teachers in a targeted manner, whereby the needed skills of one teacher are complemented by the strengths of another. Teachers then go on inter-visitations in each others' classrooms and apply lessons learned to their classes. Progress is marked throughout the year, with a new area of need identified each quarter or semester.

Teacher	Area of Improvement	Teacher Matched	Dates of Inter-visitation	Next Steps	Progress Towards Goal and Next Steps
Mr. Jackson	Group Discussions	Ms. Franklin	10/5 10/12 10/30 11/6 11/13	Will practice creating more thought-provoking questions. Will keep a record of all students who speak during a discussion. Will make an effort not to "answer his own questions."	Since October, Mr. Jackson has led two good, though short, group discussions. He has also begun to ask more critical thinking questions.
Ms. Franklin	Classroom Management	Mrs. Eddy	10/7 10/14 11/3 11/10 11/17	Will make a new seating chart for her class. Will bring a student's attention to the infraction and then tell them the correct behavior when a rule is broken. Will work on speaking in a consistent tone.	Since October, Ms. Franklin has found herself in fewer altercations with students. She has begun to "pick her battles" and reprimand more serious infractions. She feels she still needs to solidify her style.

Teachers should feel free to go outside of their team for support, but the key is that all progress is recorded and shared within the group. This program will only succeed if those who are skilled (it could even be in one area) are willing to support their colleagues.

4. Behavioral Intervention

The last major component to team meetings is commitment to a plan for behavioral intervention. A positive tone for each SLC depends on a focus on youth development. Many schools seeking to restructure are attempting to address high numbers of students deemed "at-risk" due to academic, social and/or emotional reasons. These students need a network of support and care, which in many cases means that the school must take an active role in making sure the students' emotional and basic needs are being met. This often means shifting our mindset as educators.

Many schools apply some form of “Kid Talk,” which are meetings where teachers, school social workers, guidance counselors and assistant principals gather to discuss high risk students in a “casework” fashion. The idea is for teachers to talk about students in ways that help reveal to other teachers why certain problems may arise. Then, the staff may take constructive actions to help these students.

Any approach that combines a strategic management for top discipline problems and a “broken windows” style management for minor issues will get results. Imagine that student behavioral problems form three classes—extreme, moderate and minor—and that the number of students committing those incidents is in decreasing order (5 students with extreme behavioral problems, 20 with moderate behavioral problems, and 90 who commit minor infractions like gum chewing and calling out). A successful approach will focus intensely on the extreme cases, address in a serious manner students with moderate problems, and consistently address minor infractions, thus putting a squeeze on bad behavior from the top, middle and bottom.

Principal Alan Borer took M.S. 142 in the Bronx off the list of New York City’s 16 most troubled schools using such a method. He introduced the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) method. By focusing on the most troubled students in each SLC (developing a case management system which arranges to secure the support services these students need) as well as addressing all of the minor behavioral issues, Borer cultivated an atmosphere where students felt invested in their education. When schools focus on the highest need students, and get those students the support they need, the entire tone of the building can dramatically improve. But this only occurs if the “slippables” and “pullables”—all the other students with the potential for developing behavioral problems—are addressed.

By taking the extra time to focus on the top five or so discipline problems, the whole grade can be lifted and classroom management improves overall. It is such an approach to school tone and discipline that makes schools places where all students are given the circumstances to succeed.

Thematic Enrichment and Healthy Competition

Thematic enrichment and healthy competition are the efforts that will add excitement and identity to each SLC. On the one hand, thematic enrichment is what makes students’ education come to life through real-life connections and partnerships with organizations that open their eyes to a world beyond the school walls. On the other hand, healthy competitions are the activities that make striving for success fun. If planned well, these are the activities that will make students’ learning experiences memorable.

1. Thematic Enrichment

Restructured schools must draw on the support of the larger civic community in order to attain true success. This means using each SLC’s themes as a springboard for bringing on board community-based organizations, non-profits, cultural institutions, and private industry. The themes do not replace the core curriculum of a school. Rather, they offer a way to focus activities and interdisciplinary projects. They can inform the after-school programs, provide a context for guest speakers, or even influence school uniforms. Teachers should spend the first year of restructuring thinking of interesting ways of infusing the theme into their curriculum.

Once your school has identified and made outreach to an organization aligned to the themes of your SLCs, the planning begins. Teachers, team leaders and assistant principals should plan visits to member organizations for career days and informational trips that allow students to see the work embodied in the SLC theme in action. In turn, individuals from the organizations should be invited to participate in school-based activities where their expertise and experience can benefit the students. For example, a school with a theme of law and justice may partner with a law firm and plan visits to the firm to tour the offices of real lawyers. The lawyers could in turn be invited to preside over mock trials, debates and town hall meetings run by students. These lawyers could also provide the written models for such exercises.

2. Promoting School Community through Healthy Competition

Just because a school has split into a group of smaller learning communities does not mean that school unity is out the window. In fact, restructuring can give schools an advantage in promoting school unity through healthy competition. By competing in a non-adversarial manner, teachers in different SLCs share best practices, while the competition spurs everyone to strive for their best.

Keeping school spirit alive can be difficult. It is crucial that principals, SLC leaders and teachers establish as many events as possible through which students from all SLCs can meet and showcase their skills. A simple method for keeping competition alive in all SLCs is to post daily attendance by SLC in the main entrance to the school building. That way, students will take pride in their success, and yet be driven to do better.

Healthy competition can come in the form of non-academics as well. At I.S. 218 in East New York, the sixth and seventh grades from three SLCs competed in over a dozen sports at a school-wide field day. The principal arranged for the students of each SLC to receive a “Team 218” t-shirt, color-coded by SLC. On the day of the event, the surrounding neighborhood heard more than 900 students and teachers chanting competitive anthems—they heard the new school pride.

3. Engaging Parents as Partners

Parents must be partners in the school restructuring process, from serving on the planning team during the initial phases to helping develop innovative programming once the school is launched to providing ongoing feedback to the teachers and school leaders about what is and what is not working. During the first year of operation, school leaders should reach out to parents to encourage them to help develop programming in the school, both during and after the school day. In some cases, this may be programming for students as well as the parents themselves. For example, at one restructured middle school, they chose the theme of communication technology and used a grant for increasing technology in the school to develop several computer labs and portable lap top carts that they integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. Parents were excited that their children were becoming skilled in current communication technologies, but many of them had little to no experience using the technologies themselves and were unable to support their children at home. Parent leaders proposed providing after-school and weekend programs for the parents to learn to use the technologies. Many of the sessions are taught by the students, thus giving parents and students an opportunity to engage in new and powerful ways.

Parents are often the best judges of whether or not a school is successful. Therefore, during the first year of operation, the principal and school leadership team should conduct a survey of parents to assess their satisfaction level with the new SLCs, identify areas of interest for the parents in terms of engaging in program development, and determine any barriers to participation by parents. This survey should be used to help shape the ongoing improvement and accountability work described in the following section.

Phase 5: Ongoing Improvement & Accountability

Planning and implementing school restructuring are extraordinary endeavors that can dramatically improve teaching and learning even as soon as the commitment to restructure is made. Schools often realize substantial increases in student outcomes immediately because of the focused energy and effort resulting from the restructuring process. It is critical to establish plans for ongoing improvement and accountability at this juncture in order to maintain that momentum. This section describes strategies that schools can use to ensure that the great start of restructuring becomes a great legacy in the years to come.

Schools often realize substantial increases in student outcomes immediately because of the focused energy and effort resulting from the restructuring process. It is critical to establish plans for ongoing improvement and accountability at this juncture in order to maintain that momentum.

Developing Self-Assessment Tools

Shakespeare perhaps explained the value of self-assessment best when he wrote: “To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.” For, one must know oneself and be true to oneself before one can be of service to another. This concept is at the heart of education. If we do not know how well we are performing as educators, then we cannot properly educate. Hence, the need for self-assessment tools that use outcomes-based measures to determine the strengths and weaknesses of individual educators, grade-level cohorts, SLCs and the entire school.

CEI-PEA recommends three levels of self-assessment tools for restructured schools, which together can form the basis for resource re-allocation, instructional interventions, curriculum changes and the creation of new programming. These self-assessment tools are described below.

1. Teacher/Classroom Performance Review

Annually, every teacher, working with the school leadership team, should use student outcome data and parent satisfaction data to assess the performance of students in the classroom and the teacher’s instruction. The review can include the following steps:

1. Review of student outcome data, focusing on gains made during the school year.

2. Review of other student data such as attendance rates and incident rates.

3. Review of observations made by peer teachers and school/SLC leaders.

4. Review of teacher data such as attendance, professional development activities and collaborative work.

Teacher/classroom performance reviews should be conducted as opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful discussion about their instructional strategies with mentor teachers and school leaders. Following individual reviews, teachers across grade level, academic area and SLC should also meet as peers to discuss what did and did not work for them in the prior year. This provides an opportunity for teachers to develop collaborative approaches to helping one another improve teaching and learning.

2. SLC-wide Performance Review

Annually, the SLC leader, working with the school leadership team, should use student outcome data and parent satisfaction data to assess the SLC performance. The review can include the following steps:

1. Review student outcome data for the first year of the SLC, including test scores, attendance rates, and student incidents. Data should be disaggregated to determine SLC-level progress towards the AYP goal of the entire school. It should also be disaggregated according to federally recognized subgroups.

2. Review teacher performance through student outcome data, observations and teacher data (e.g. teacher attendance rate).

3. Identify strengths and weaknesses within the SLC plan as reflected in student outcome data (e.g. if English language arts test scores are low, review staffing and instruction in this area).

4. Review curriculum and instruction model to ensure that interdisciplinary teaching and learning are taking place.

5. Review parent survey information to identify strengths and weaknesses of parent involvement strategies in the SLCs.

Based on the school-wide educational plan (see below), the school leadership team should use the findings of the review to formulate plans to address weaknesses and build upon strengths. Such plans should include professional development for teachers and SLC leaders, scheduling revisions to better support interdisciplinary instruction, and better utilization of school-wide parent resources to increase parent involvement.

3. School-wide Performance Review

The school leadership team should conduct an annual performance review with the mandate of using student outcome data and parent satisfaction data to assess the school-wide performance. The review can include the following steps:

1. Review student outcome data for the first year of the restructured school, including test scores, attendance rates, and student incidents.

2. Identify strengths and weaknesses within the restructuring plan as reflected in student outcome data (e.g. if student incidents are high, assess the division of space among SLCs to determine traffic flow problems and particular sites within the building where incidents are high).

3. Review teacher performance through student outcome data, observations and teacher data (e.g. teacher attendance rate).

4. Conduct a survey of parents to assess satisfaction with the school and ascertain levels of parent involvement.

The school leadership team should use the findings of the review to adapt the school's educational plan to address weaknesses and build upon strengths. The educational plan should include appropriate professional development for staff and school leaders and reformulation of space and staff assignments among SLCs.

4. Follow-up to Performance Reviews

The annual performance reviews should serve as planning sessions that can guide the coming year of work. We recommend that schools establish plans for follow-up to the reviews throughout the school year. These can be integrated into the peer professional development program (see Phase 4).

5. Peer Reviews

External reviews can be powerful tools for schools to identify weaknesses and develop strategies for addressing them. When the external review is conducted by peers from other restructured schools, they can be particularly useful as those conducting the review understand the reform endeavor that the school has undertaken. CEI-PEA recommends that all schools hold annual external peer reviews for the first five years after restructuring and as necessary beyond that time period. An effective external peer review should include the following:

1. It should be conducted by a team of educators who are familiar with school restructuring, perhaps familiar with the school itself, but capable of remaining objective in its assessment.

2. In advance of the review, the team should be provided with comprehensive information about the school, including: mission/vision statements for the school and SLCs; biographical summary of school and SLC leaders; copy of the school accountability plan; comprehensive student outcome data for the prior three years.

3. The team should spend at least three full days on site and their work should include: interviews with school leadership, teachers, parents, students and other key staff members; classroom observations; and comprehensive reviews of student outcome data.

4. The team should provide a full narrative report that includes observed strengths and weaknesses, as well as recommendations for improvement.

5. Representatives from the team should meet with the school principal and SLC leaders to go over the report and develop an action plan based upon the recommendations in the report.

Joining a Network of Schools

In New York City, CEI-PEA operates a network of more than 220 public schools. This network serves as a backbone to restructuring efforts in New York City as well as other school and district leaders around the country. The network provides school leaders with a valuable peer group that can help guide the restructuring from the first visits to successfully restructured schools through to the ongoing peer reviews once the school is restructured. It also provides a structure for schools to pool resources and access professional development and technical assistance to address common needs such as budget assistance, help raising outcomes of students with special needs, or implementing technology in the classroom.

For schools outside New York City, CEI-PEA recommends building a network among your immediate peer group. Identify other school leaders that you respect and whose guidance you would welcome. Suggest forming a network to meet once a month, outside of the school communities. Beginning with this simple peer-level support, you can build a network of trusted peers with whom you will be able to accomplish significant improvements for both your students and those in the other network schools.

Assessment & Accountability Tools

CEI-PEA has developed tools for performing school assessments that can contribute to the growth and development of the school. In the next section of this guide we include a sample school survey that can be used for baseline assessments. For more resources, visit the CEI-PEA website at www.cei-pea.org.

School Questionnaire

Prepared by:

Center for Educational Innovation -
Public Education Association

Purpose

This survey is intended to gain baseline data about a school. It can be used at the outset of the restructuring process to help determine the overall status of the school, including student demographics and outcomes, teacher retention rates and leadership experience. The data collected should help guide the restructuring process by identifying the strengths and needs of the school community.

Instructions

The goal is to gain three-year historical data in as many categories as possible in order to distinguish trends. Blanks are provided at the end of the year sets for the survey administrator to complete (e.g. 200_ - 200_).

Once the data is completed by the appropriate school personnel, the survey administrator should prepare a report from the data to share with the principal and planning team, highlighting strengths and weaknesses.

You can download this survey tool and other resources at the CEI-PEA website at: www.cei-pea.org.

General School Information

School Name	
Grades Served	
School Leader	
Address	
Office Phone	Cell Phone
Fax	
Email	
Year school opened	
Length of school day	
School's Mission Statement	
Brief Description of Instructional Program (Attach additional pages, if necessary)	
After School & Extended-Year Programs (Please provide a brief listing.)	

Teaching Staff Data

Current Summary Data

Total Number of Teaching Staff	Number:
Percent of Teachers Currently Certified	Percent:
Teacher Experience Level	Please indicate percents: 0-2 years: 2-4 years: 4-6 years: 6-8 years: 8-10 years: 10+ years:
Total Number of Teacher Aides	Number:
Teacher Aide Experience Level	Please indicate percents: 0-2 years: 2-4 years: 4-6 years: 6-8 years: 8-10 years: 10+ years:
Student/Teacher Ratio	Ratio:

Teacher Retention

Please indicate the total number of teachers working in your school during the following school years, as well as the number of teachers who left the school during or at the end of those school years.

Data	200_-200_	200_-200_	200_-200_
Total number of teachers			
Number who left the school			

School Leadership Data

Number of years current principal has been leader at the school	Number:
Principal Experience Level (total years in education)	0-2 years: 2-4 years: 4-6 years: 6-8 years: 8-10 years: 10+ years:
Principal Experience Level (total years as a school leader – AP level or higher)	0-2 years: 2-4 years: 4-6 years: 6-8 years: 8-10 years: 10+ years:
Assistant Principals	Number:
AP Experience Levels	Please indicate percents: 0-2 years: 2-4 years: 4-6 years: 6-8 years: 8-10 years: 10+ years:
Other Administrators	Please list titles:

Student Data

Number of Students

Grade Level	200_-200_	200_-200_	200_-200_	Current
Kindergarten				
1st Grade				
2nd Grade				
3rd Grade				
4th Grade				
5th Grade				
6th Grade				
7th Grade				
8th Grade				
9th Grade				
10th Grade				
11th Grade				
12th Grade				
TOTAL				

Ethnicity (Percentage)

	200_-200_	200_-200_	200_-200_	Current
African American				
Hispanic				
Asian				
Caucasian				
Other (Please specify)				

Gender (Percentage)

	200_-200_	200_-200_	200_-200_	Current
Male				
Female				

Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible (Number & Percentage)

200_-200_		200_-200_		200_-200_		Current	
#:	%:	#:	%:	#:	%:	#:	%:

English Language Learners (Number & Percentage)

200_-200_		200_-200_		200_-200_		Current	
#:	%:	#:	%:	#:	%:	#:	%:

Special Education Students (Number & Percentage)

200_-200_		200_-200_		200_-200_		Current	
#:	%:	#:	%:	#:	%:	#:	%:

Attendance Rate (Number & Percentage)

200_-200_		200_-200_		200_-200_		Current	
#:	%:	#:	%:	#:	%:	#:	%:

Student Suspensions (Number)

200_-200_	200_-200_	200_-200_	Current
#:	#:	#:	#:

School-wide Mobility Rates

Please indicate the percentage of students leaving the school during or at the end of the school year.

200_-200_	200_-200_	200_-200_	Current
%:	%:	%:	%:

Student Mobility Rates (By Grade)

Please indicate the percentage of students who were continuously registered in your school for the past three school years.

Grade Level	% of students continuously registered
3rd Grade	
4th Grade	
5th Grade	
6th Grade	
7th Grade	
8th Grade	
9th Grade	
10th Grade	
11th Grade	
12th Grade	
TOTAL	

School Exit Data

High Schools

If you have a 12th grade, please provide graduation rates for the total senior class. Indicate the types of degrees offered in your state and municipality and the percentages issued in each category (e.g. Advanced Regents Diploma, Regents Diploma, Local Diploma, IEP Diploma).

Degree Type	200_-200_ % Sr. Class	200_-200_ % Sr. Class	200_-200_ % Sr. Class
Type:			
Type:			
Type:			
Type:			

Please provide college admission rates below.

Admission to:	200_-200_ % Sr. Class	200_-200_ % Sr. Class	200_-200_ % Sr. Class
2-Year/ Community			
4-Year Colleges & Universities			

Middle Schools

If you have an 8th grade, please provide a listing of the three high schools that the majority of your students attended upon leaving your school last year.

High School Largest % of students attend	High School 2nd Largest % of students attend	High School 3rd Largest % of students attend

Elementary Schools

If you are an elementary school, please provide a listing of the three middle schools that the majority of your students attended upon leaving your school last year.

Middle School Largest % of students attend	Middle School 2nd Largest % of students attend	Middle School 3rd Largest % of students attend

Testing Data

Please provide information regarding state-administered assessments as well as other norm-referenced tests and assessments that your school uses to monitor student outcomes and improve instruction.

For state-administered assessments, please indicate the grades tested and provide outcome data for all students tested during the years indicated. Also, these charts provide for five performance levels. If your state uses less than five levels, please complete only those levels appropriate to your scoring system.

State English Language Arts Data – ALL students tested

Indicate percentage of students performing at each level.

	200_					200_					200_				
	1	2	3	4	5*	1	2	3	4	5*	1	2	3	4	5*

* This chart provides for five performance levels. If your state uses less than five levels, please complete only those levels appropriate to your scoring system.

State Math Data – ALL students tested

Indicate percentage of students performing at each level.

	200_					200_					200_				
	1	2	3	4	5*	1	2	3	4	5*	1	2	3	4	5*

* This chart provides for five performance levels. If your state uses less than five levels, please complete only those levels appropriate to your scoring system.

State English Language Arts Data
Continually enrolled students tested

Please provide outcome data for only those students who have been continuously registered during the past three years.

	200_					200_					200_				
	1	2	3	4	5*	1	2	3	4	5*	1	2	3	4	5*

* This chart provides for five performance levels. If your state uses less than five levels, please complete only those levels appropriate to your scoring system.

State Math Data
Continually enrolled students tested

Please provide outcome data for only those students who have been continuously registered during the past three years.

	200_					200_					200_				
	1	2	3	4	5*	1	2	3	4	5*	1	2	3	4	5*

* This chart provides for five performance levels. If your state uses less than five levels, please complete only those levels appropriate to your scoring system.

Other Norm-Referenced Test Data

Please list other norm-referenced tests or assessments that your school uses to monitor student outcomes and improve instruction (e.g. the Iowa Test of Basic Skills). Please attach a copy of the test results by grade level as well as any summaries or breakdowns of the data that you have developed.

List of Other Tests and Assessments

Name of Test/Assessment	Grades Tested

School Capacity & Development

Board of Directors

Do you have a Board of Directors?	Yes/No
If yes, is the Board composed of members independent of the school staff?	Yes/No
How many members are on the Board?	Number:
How many times a year does the Board meet?	Number:
What is/are the primary function(s) of the Board? Either put an "X" next to the appropriate category or, if your Board serves several of these functions, rank the order of importance.	__ Academic Advisement __ Governance __ Fundraising & Development __ Community Relations __ Other _____

Fundraising & Development

What was the school's operating budget for the past three years?	Current: Prior Year: Two Years Prior:
Do you have a Development Office?	Yes/No
If yes, who staffs the Development Office?	__ Development Director (circle: full/part time) __ Grant Writer (circle: full/part time) __ Other staff _____ (circle: full/part time)
If no, who holds primary responsibility for fundraising activities?	Name and Title:
How much private funding did your school raise during the last three years?	Current: Prior Year: Two Years Prior:
What is your primary source of revenue? Either put an "X" next to the appropriate category or, if you raise funds from several of these categories, rank the order with highest source of revenue as "1".	__ Tuition __ Corporate Partners __ Foundations __ Government Grants __ Individuals __ Other _____

Plans for Growth

What is the school's current enrollment capacity?	Number:
Do you wish to grow in terms of enrollment?	Yes/No
If yes, to what level?	Number:

What would be required for your school to achieve this goal?	Resources needed (e.g. space, more teachers, etc.):
Please list other growth plans or goals that would require additional resources:	Resources needed:

Parent Involvement

How many times a year do teachers hold parent/teacher conferences?	Number:
Do you have a parent advisory organization?	Yes/No
If yes, what is the primary purpose of the organization? Either put an "X" next to the appropriate category or, if the organization serves several of these purposes, rank the order of importance.	__ Building relations with teachers __ Fundraising __ Community outreach __ Other _____
What percentage of parents are members of the organization?	Percent:
How many times a year does the parent organization meet?	Number:
Does your school provide activities for parents?	Yes/No:

If so, what kinds of activities are provided? Either put an "X" next to the appropriate category or, if you provide several of these activities, rank the order of importance.	__ Parenting advise __ Adult literacy training __ Computer training __ Job training __ Other _____
Do you have community partners who help provide parent activities?	Yes/No

Student Cost, Recruitment & Selection

What is the current cost per student?	Figure:
Tuition charged (if applicable):	Figure:
Scholarship aid provided?	Yes/No
If yes, average amount of aid provided:	Figure:
State per pupil allocation (if charter):	Figure:
What is the primary mode of student recruitment? Either put an "X" next to the appropriate category or, if the school uses several of these strategies, rank the order of importance.	__ Lottery __ Visits to "feeder" schools __ Outreach through community organizations __ Outreach through religious organizations __ Alumni __ Word of mouth __ Other _____
Do prospective students complete an application?	Yes/No
Are prospective students interviewed?	Yes/No

What percentage of applicants were admitted during the past three years:	Current: Prior Year: Two Years Prior:
What percentage of applicants resides in the local neighborhood of the school?	Current: Prior Year: Two Years Prior:
What percentage of admitted students resides in the local neighborhood of the school?	Current: Prior Year: Two Years Prior:

Self Assessment

Please describe the top three strengths of your school and top three challenges that your school faces in achieving your growth and development goals.

Top 3 School Strengths

1.
2.
3.

Top 3 School Challenges

1.
2.
3.


Notes:

Citations

1 - Oxley, D. (2004). Small learning communities: implementing and deepening practice. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Cotton, K. (1996). School size, school climate, and student performance. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

2 - Hylden, Jordan (2005). What's So Big about Small Schools? The Case for Small Schools: Nationwide and in North Dakota. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government, Program on Education Policy and Governance.

Gregory, T. (October, 1997). "School reform and the no man's land of high school size." Bloomington, IN: Paper presented at the meeting of the Journal of Curriculum Theorizing.

Lee, V.E. and Smith, J.B. (1995). "Effects of high school restructuring and size on early gains in achievement and engagement." Sociology of Education, 68(4), 241-270.

Stockard, J. and Mayberry, M. (1992). Effective educational environments. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.

Pittman, R.B. and Haughwout, P. (1987). "Influence of high school size on dropout rate." Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9(4), 337-343.

3 - Coplan, M.A. and Boatright, E. (2004). "Leading Small: Eight Lessons for Leaders in Transforming Large Comprehensive High Schools." Phi Delta Kappan, v 85, n 10, 762.

Husbands and Beese (July, 2001). "Review of selected high school reform strategies." Aspen, CO: Paper presented at the meeting of the Aspen Program on Education.

4 - Pate, Sharon Shamburger (December, 1999). "The Influence of a Mandatory School Uniform Policy." Orlando, FL: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Career and Technical Education.

Ryan, Rosemary P. and Ryan, Thomas E. (1998). "School Uniforms: Esprit de Corps." School Community Journal, v8, n2, 81-84.

For more on the debate surrounding research on school uniforms, see the work of David Brunsma.

Additional Resources

This guide is based on the experiences of CEI-PEA's field personnel and members of the CEI-PEA School Network who have implemented successful school restructurings. There are many other groups working to identify and develop best practices in school restructuring. Among the resources CEI-PEA recommends are:

Annenberg Institute for School Reform - www.annenberginstitute.org/tools

The Annenberg Institute provides a set of tools for school improvement that includes observation protocols, focus group samples and questions, surveys, questionnaires, and other techniques to help you examine your specific school improvement concerns.

Coalition of Essential Schools - www.essentialschools.org

This coalition of small schools is in the midst of a five-year initiative to develop more small schools across the nation. Visit their website to read about their small schools project and visit their virtual laboratory that provides information on best practices in small schools.

CSBA Small School Development- www.csba.org/ssd/samples

A clearinghouse of successful programs in use in California's small schools.

National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities - www.edfacilities.org/rl/size.cfm

Created in 1997 by the U.S. Department of Education, NCEF provides information on planning, designing, funding, building, improving, and maintaining safe, healthy, high performance schools. NCEF provides a resource list on school size, including restructuring of large schools into sets of smaller learning communities.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory - www.ncrel.org

Provides a "viewpoints" services that includes a multimedia package on the creation of small schools.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory - www.nwrel.org/scpd/sslc

NWREL provides resources for educators, policymakers, parents, and the public. These resources include information on recreating large schools into sets of smaller learning communities.

Small Schools Project - www.smallschoolsproject.org

The Small Schools Project provides support and assistance to K-12 schools in Washington State and nationally that have received reinvention grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Small Schools Workshop - www.smallschoolsworkshop.org

A group of educators, organizers and researchers based in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. The group collaborates with teachers, principals, parents and district leaders to create new, small, innovative learning communities in public schools.

University of Minnesota, Center for School Change - www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/school-change/

The Center researches and supports small schools and charter schools, providing information on innovative policies and practices in Minnesota and nationally.

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Center for Educational Innovation - Public Education Association

The Center for Educational Innovation – Public Education Association (CEI-PEA) is a New York-based nonprofit organization that creates successful public schools and educational programs. CEI-PEA's staff of experienced leaders in public education provides hands-on support to improve the skills of teachers and school leaders, increase parent involvement, and channel cultural and academic enrichment programs into schools. The benefits of this hands-on support are multiplied through a network of more than 220 public schools in New York as well as work in other major urban school systems across the country and around the world. CEI-PEA operates in cooperation with, but independently of, public school systems, providing private citizens the opportunity to make wise investments in the public schools.

Center for Educational Innovation - Public Education Association
28 West 44th Street, Suite 300
New York, NY 10036
212.302.8800
www.cei-pea.org