

**Foundational
Elements**



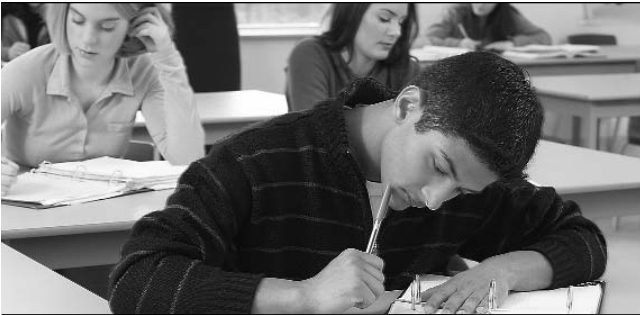
Vision



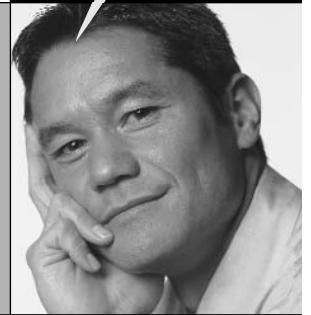
DECEMBER 2006

Final Report

To the Community



**Core
Values**



**Leadership
Attributes**



Structure

Who's Who

Manual Advisory Committee — The Advisory Committee was chosen by the district in May to oversee and ensure an authentic community process for the Manual renewal. They chose the renewal team to staff the process.

Manual Renewal Team — The renewal team was chosen by the Manual Advisory Committee to staff the renewal process.

Education Research Partner — part of the renewal team — serves as a resource for the Council and the renewal process and is responsible for providing the Community Council with data and best practices information on high-performing schools from around the country.

Community Council — the Council is a 32-member volunteer committee of various representatives of the Manual community including students, parents, alumni, teachers, educators, business, faith, and other community members. They are responsible for developing a set of recommendations to guide development of the new school vision, staff and program at Manual.

Community Champions — Community Champions are community-based individuals who are assisting the renewal team with coordination of community conversations in their specific communities.



Overview

In February 2006 the Denver Public School (DPS) Board made the difficult decision to close Manual High School for one year. This decision was made due to low achievement, declining enrollment, high attrition rates and lack of available resources for students. The Board felt that starting over was the only way to offer future students from the Manual neighborhood an excellent high school that prepared them for college and future career success.

After the closing, district administration and the School Board made clear that its top priority is to ensure that all former Manual students make a successful transition into their new high schools. This past summer and fall have been filled with ongoing efforts to do everything possible to help these students make a positive transition.

The Manual Renewal Process

At the heart of the Manual Renewal Process was a twelve-week effort to involve the Manual community in a thorough and meaningful engagement effort. The Manual Advisory Council and the Manual Renewal Team crafted and implemented the process based on the following guiding principles. The process:

- Is authentic, transparent and inclusive;
- Utilizes a constant feedback loop, or accordion model, for maximum community engagement; and
- Infuses educational research, best practices and alignment with the Denver Plan at multiple levels.

The process was divided into three phases and focused on engaging Manual community members and other stakeholders at several key connecting points (see diagram to the left):

- Community Council Meetings
- General Community Meetings
- Community Conversations
- Neighborhood walks and presentations

Voices
from the
Community

“We are extremely pleased with the entire renewal process. We set out to implement a community-based process and we accomplished that goal. We now have a set of very useful tools and voices to guide the work of re-opening Manual as model school.”

THERESA PĚNA
DPS School
Board President

“ This was a very engaging team that had robust discussion on every issue during the process. We have undoubtedly become the voice of the students, parents and community.”

DARRICK BROWN
Wells Fargo Bank
Executive

The Community Council

The Community Council was comprised of 32 Denver residents representing outstanding local parents, students, Manual alumni, businesses, educators, community leaders and nonprofit, faith and community-based organizations. Formed in late July, the Council met as a group nine times, divided into sub-committees, and conducted school site visits in Boston, Los Angeles and Denver.

Community Council members represented diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives about the closing and reopening of Manual High School and of education generally. Council meetings were staffed by the Manual Renewal Team and were open to the public. The Council received, processed and requested more information through:

- Conversations with one another;
- General Community meetings;
- Analysis of Community Conversation responses;
- Presentations by and discussions with the Center for Performance Assessment;
- Local and out-of-state school site visits; and
- Conversations with Denver Public Schools’ staff.

Community Conversations

To ensure an authentic, transparent and inclusive community process, the Manual Renewal Team set a goal to hold more than 100 Community Conversations. This goal was exceeded tenfold. More than 1,000 community members participated in community conversations. These conversations were held with groups of up to 40 community members and as individual conversations. Carefully facilitated to gather similar information from each conversation at each phase in the process, the formal and informal conversations proved to be an effective way to gather community voices.

Highlights of the Community Conversation component include:

- More than 1,000 community members participated in community conversations,
- The Renewal Team gathered more than 2,500 responses to questions about the new Manual High School
- 750 community members provided contact information for the Manual Renewal database;
- 443 community members requested follow up information;
- 274 community members expressed interest in volunteering in the process.

The Community Conversations were largely supported by a group of 26 Community Champions - community members who live and work in the Manual. The Champions distributed information about the renewal process and the general community meetings, participated in neighborhood walks, conducted individual and small group community conversations, and connected their neighborhood schools, churches and small businesses to the renewal process.

The Community Conversations connected a diverse chorus of community voices to the Manual Renewal Process and began to engage community members — even those not likely to attend a meeting or speak out publicly — in the process of creating the new school. *(For a full list of organizations and community groups that hosted conversations see the full final report presented to the Superintendent and DPS Board.)*

The responses gathered from Community Conversations were analyzed and shared with the Community Council at every meeting. The Council used the community voices to create a set of core values, a shared vision for the new high school, the attributes of a leader and faculty, and the program elements that are outlined in this report. It is important to note that the community responses were:

- Consistent — across culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse community groups and among youth and adults;
- Aligned — with current research about high performing urban schools and with what Community Council members saw and heard at the school site visits; and
- Demanding — responses across community groups spoke to the community's desire for academic rigor, high expectations for all students, and a consistent school structure and routine.

Site Visits

The Community Council conducted site visits to high schools in Boston, Los Angeles and Denver. The purpose of the visits was to give delegates a visible and tangible understanding of a wide range of possibilities for high performing schools. The charge to these delegates was to observe best practices and consider what elements in these carefully chosen schools might be built into the new Manual High School. Criteria used for the selection of schools included significant improvement on standardized test scores, attendance and graduation rates, higher rates of college attendance, and demographics that closely matched the Manual student population (70–80 percent poverty, more than 70 percent Latino/African American, and a high number of second language learners).

“The Community Champions put forth a lot of effort to communicate with parents and obtain their ideas about what they wanted to see in the new Manual. It is very important that parents continue to be informed about the next steps and that they have an opportunity to participate. I hope that everything that was promised to the community is honored so that we can re-create trust between the community and the school district.”

ESTELA VALLES
Community Member

“ I am very optimistic about our work. All of our consultants have done a marvelous job and we have been working very, very hard to provide the community with the opportunity to express themselves. We’ve taken the raw input provided by the community and developed a sophisticated instrument that communicates the vision for the new Manual.”

JORGÉ MERIDIA
Community Activist,
Community Council
Co-Chair

Recommendation

The Council’s work is grounded in a strong set of core values that shaped a common vision for the new school. This vision centers on a school that sets high expectations for all students — one that prepares them for higher education and personal success, provides relevant and personalized learning experiences, is led by strong and dedicated leaders and staff, and ultimately serves as the heart of the entire Manual community.

CORE VALUES

The Manual community believes it is critical for the new Manual to have:

- A caring climate
- Students who are taught by a high-quality staff that provides high-quality instruction
- Students who are committed and responsible
- A focus on rigor, relevance, results and relationships
- A school that is safe and has students are supported by clear and consistent policies
- A wide range of incentives and supports for students
- A school that establishes relationships with parents and parents are engaged in their children’s lives
- Students and staff have access to high quality materials, equipment and facilities
- Opportunities for students to participate in a wide range of activities and programs
- Establishes meaningful relationships with community and community involvement is critical

For more information or to get a copy of the full final report presented to the Superintendent and School Board, visit the DPS Website at www.dpsk12.org or call Glenna Norvelle at 720-423-3403.

Vision for Manual High School

Every student at Manual High School will be educated to the highest level.

The educational experience at Manual will encourage, challenge and prepare all students for higher education and personal success. Teaching and learning at Manual will be relevant to students' lives and experiences, past and present.

Manual High School will provide a safe, culturally-inclusive environment that personalizes and supports a wide variety of programs and activities to meet the needs and aspirations of every student. Academic success and accountability at Manual will be ensured through the high expectations of a strong and dedicated leadership, quality instruction, ample resources, committed and responsible students and an involved community.

Manual High School will be the heart of a support network for families, neighboring elementary and middle schools, and the community at large.

“Our goal was to always have the redesign of Manual High School to be community-based. It was imperative. Education takes place in the combination of home, the community and the school. This report respects that progress.”

ELBRA
WEDGEWORTH
Denver City
Councilwoman
(District 8)

Preferred Attributes of the Manual Leadership

Based on input and feedback from community conversations, Community Council meetings, general community meetings, and foundational research, the Council compiled a list of preferred leadership attributes for the new Manual leader. From this process it became clear that the school principal must believe and act upon the belief that all students can reach high levels of academic achievement and must be relentless in this mission.

- The school principal must believe and act upon the belief, that all students can reach high levels of academic achievement
- A proven instructional leader and inspiring communicator with strong administrative and/or business management, organizational and strategic planning experience.
- A proven track record recruiting students and families and garnering additional resources for the school.
- Has high expectations for all students as well as the capacity to inspire teachers, parents and students, and the broader community to embrace that vision and culture of success.
- Must be open to innovative ideas, while actively seeking proven strategies to improve student achievement.
- A collaborative instructional leader and a proven team builder with strong leadership skills
- Must genuinely value cultural, racial and economic diversity.
- Will lead by example and a hands-on approach.
- Will hold people accountable and focused on goals and priorities
- Shows a willingness to take tough, principled stands even when unpopular
- Ensures that adequate resources are available to achieve objectives; and makes decisions that benefit the school's mission and continuing financial viability.

Recommended Foundational Elements

This is the foundational core of the Council's work. Throughout this process, The Center for Performance Assessment (CPA) provided research-based information and best practices of high performing urban high schools. As earlier mentioned, the community also articulated preferred programmatic elements. Both perspectives were shared with the Council for consideration. The elements articulated by the Council have been aligned with the Denver Plan.

INTENTIONAL CULTURE

- All school instruction and activities have a central focus on vision and mission
- Powerful and consistent relationships are developed during advisement class or other designated times for students and teachers outside of regular classroom — the way in which this time is structured helps to build relationships.
- There are high expectations by and for all
- Discipline is clear and consistent and managed with dignity

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There is rigorous and comprehensive instruction including accelerated Placement, college prep and honors classes.
- Additional time is provided for literacy and math instruction including double blocking as needed
- A wide variety of meaningful, relevant learning opportunities are created to engage students
- All students have individual learning plans

SUPPORT

- A strong foundation of academic support is provided including:
 - Study Groups, peer-to-peer tutoring, mentors, Saturday academy
 - Summer bridge programs, Computer/internet access for all — after school and weekends
 - Time during the day for teachers to meet with students (teacher accessibility for students)
- An intentional social service- based resource center is developed, staffed and funded through partnerships and outside sources. These services will be determined by the new school principal, faculty, students, parents and community and might include:
 - pregnancy and/or daycare support, gang awareness programs
 - support for immigrant and historically underserved students, etc.
- Strong community partnerships are built with business, non-profit organizations, alumni, and cultural arts organizations

Structure of Manual High School

The Council grappled with what type of school Manual will be in the future. After much discussion regarding the distinction between a comprehensive and focused school and consideration of ideas, the Council voted in favor of recommending a comprehensive high school. Overall, the Council felt that the new Manual should provide a rigorous general academic program with a balance of language arts, math, science and social studies coursework. They also felt this school should have a broad and even balance of electives in core subject areas as well as sports and extra-curricular options. Ultimately, the Council recommends that the new Manual be a rigorous comprehensive high school that builds student futures thorough personalized learning, college preparation, and career exploration.

The recommendation made by the Council is consistent with the majority of community voices that were gathered and analyzed regarding the type of school Manual should be. There were a few Council members who voted for an alternative to a comprehensive high school, citing that in general urban comprehensive high schools experienced limited success in educating low-income and minority students. Others felt that a comprehensive high school with a focus and/or small learning communities should be considered by the future leader and potentially phased in. The point was also made that the school needs to be built to fit future students, and there should be an opportunity for the principal and staff to further develop and shape the future of the school.

There was rich and in-depth discussion about what grades the new Manual should serve. Many Council members felt that too many former Manual students came to the school woefully under-prepared for high school work and this contributed (in part) to the low academic achievement at Manual. While the majority of Council members voted to re-open Manual as a 9th grade and build the school one year at a time, a few Council members supported 6–12 and 7–12 options.

Although the Council decided to re-open Manual starting with a 9th grade, they did express great concern about the current condition of the Northeast quadrant feeder schools. The Council felt strongly that in order to transform Manual High School, the School Board and District needed to address the achievement issues affecting the Manual area feeder schools. The Council urges the School Board and District to strategically address the Manual area feeder patterns to ensure that there are high quality educational options for students and families and that students come to the new Manual High School academically prepared for 9th grade.

Also, although the school will open only as a 9th grade in the fall of 2007, the community was clear that it will support the new leader in a variety of ways including securing resources. And, the Council and greater Manual community will work in partnership with the new principal to ensure that the foundational elements recommended are well implemented.

What's Ahead

ONGOING

Support of former Manual students through the MARC, mentoring and school ambassadors (peer-to-peer outreach)

DECEMBER/JANUARY

National search for school principal

JANUARY

Council recommendations help inform the selection of a school principal

SPRING 2007

School principal hires top-notch staff and works with the community to develop a detailed school design

AUGUST 2007

Manual re-opens as a model high school

Voices from the Community

“ The facilitators started us out with easy decisions, building to the most difficult at the end. I stepped away from the process towards the end to allow the actual Manual community to decide on the type of school Manual would be. ”

DEBORAH SCHMUCK
Teacher-Librarian
West High School

*Shelly Travis Ted Travis Dixie Trimble Estrella Valles
Zerina G. Flores
Cynthia L. Flores Candi DeBaca Darrick Brown
Carla Madison Julissa Torres Loretta Pena-Helm Brian Fitch*

Manual Renewal Community Council Members

Councilman Michael Hancock ▪ Charles Malek ▪ Jorge Mario Mérida Simone Williams
Darrick Brown ▪ Candi C DeBaca ▪ Cathy Calder Loralie Cole ▪ Stephanie Cross ▪ Brian Fitch ▪
Cynthia Flores ▪ Zerina Flores ▪ Alan Gottlieb ▪ Brian Greer ▪ Angel Gutierrez ▪ Rich Harrison
Venita Lewis ▪ Shantel Lewis ▪ Carla Madison ▪ Raquel Martinez ▪ Enrique Orozco ▪ Earnestine
Parker ▪ Lorie Pena-Helm Deborah Schmuck ▪ Janice Spearman ▪ Jamie Torres ▪ Julissa Torrez ▪
Shelly Travis ▪ Ted Travis ▪ Dixie Trimble ▪ Estella Valles

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