



PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

High School System
501 N. Dixon, Portland, OR 97227
Phone: 503-916-2000

Date: June 24, 2009

To: Superintendent Carole Smith

From: High School System Design Team

Re: Recommendations on a new high school system model, next steps

The charge to the High School System Design Team is clear: Recommend systemwide improvements to the PPS High School System in order to increase graduation rates, increase student engagement, close the achievement gap and ensure all schools are in high demand.

Portland Public Schools is pursuing a range of strategies to achieve those outcomes: improving curriculum materials, focusing on instructional practice and increasing support for students as they transition to high schools. The Design Team was charged with focusing on a narrower range of strategies that are more “structural” in nature:

- Program allocation and distribution — determining what kinds of schools, programs and courses Portland Public Schools should offer and where they should be offered; and
- Policies and strategies for determining how students equitably access these programs.

This effort is based on extensive research and review, not only of high school best practices and lessons learned nationally, but also on analysis of the strengths and deficits of our current high school system and individual programs. The team’s work confirmed two key findings: first, that our current system does not equitably meet the needs of our students with consistent and strong high school programs, and second, that national and local examples exist of how we can do better. This is urgent work: Our high school system is failing too many students.

The Design Team has conducted a lengthy engagement process. Starting with principals and teachers, the engagement grew to involve thousands of community members, students, teachers and other PPS staff this spring. Their insights and opinions, along with the research, lead us to propose a series of recommendations that we believe should help PPS achieve the outcomes we want for our students.

As we discussed these issues in the community, we heard consensus in five areas related to high schools:

1. **There is no one-size-fits-all solution.** PPS must provide a system that offers options and flexibility to meet the educational needs of all students and families in the district.

2. **Community building should be at the core of any new system.** PPS should create schools that serve the entire community. Community members, especially groups representing communities of color, urged PPS to include targeted community engagement and community building as part of any structure that is implemented.
3. **Neighborhoods matter.** Strong schools attended by students from the surrounding neighborhoods foster community ownership, school pride and family involvement. Families want strong options close to home.
4. **Equity is a critical priority.** PPS high schools must offer students a consistent core curriculum and offerings no matter where they live to help eliminate the glaring “opportunity gap” among current campuses.
5. **Teaching is essential.** Students and families in particular stressed that PPS must have effective teachers who care about students and make courses engaging.

The broad consensus of stakeholders in these five areas has shaped the Design Team’s recommendations.

In this memo, we ask for your endorsement of a model for Portland’s future High School System. We have laid out the framework for that model — the ideal for how the system could offer a range of options to meet student needs, with equity in access, resources and academic opportunity.

This memo also lays out recommendations for the work ahead: the next steps and actions that will move us toward the new model, with changes beginning just over one year from now, in fall 2010.

We have arrived at this framework after consultation with students, teachers and administrators, community groups and the public at large. As we move toward specific policy changes and the many decisions to come — school locations, program shifts, boundary lines — we will again engage the community in the process. Some who are anxious for specific answers — about their school, their program or their student — may want more detail now. But we do not recommend moving forward piecemeal on these types of decisions without broader community engagement in, and resolution of, the systemwide policies and practices that support a new model. We must conduct this work with great transparency.

Endorsing a model is one step in our ongoing effort to meet the challenge before us: providing every high school student with an education that truly prepares him or her for the next step in life, career, college and citizenship.

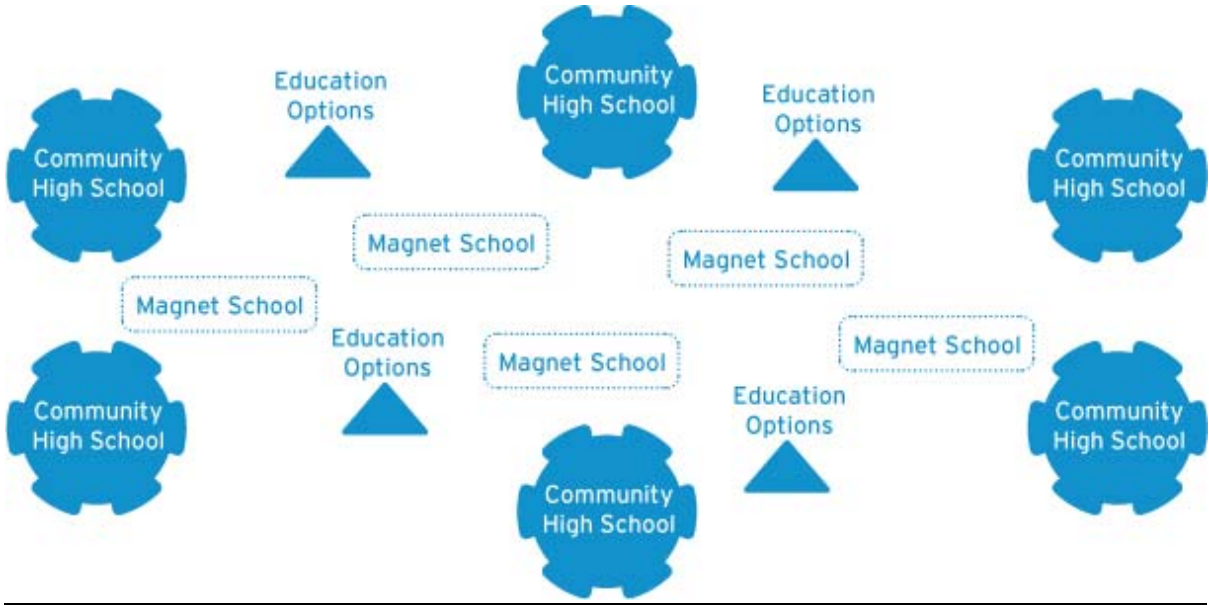
A MODEL FOR PORTLAND’S FUTURE

Through our work, community, PPS staff and the Design Team members have confirmed a mutual commitment that every student must have the opportunity to attend a high school that best meets his or her individual needs — and that opportunity must include equitable access, not dependent on a student’s home address. That core commitment has two implications: First, PPS should offer different types of

high schools that seek to serve the unique needs of students; and second, students must have equal access to these different types of high schools.

The Design Team thus recommends a high school model that provides these options for students: community schools, magnet schools and education options.

- **Community schools** should be relatively equal in size (ranging from 1,100-1,400 students) with consistent and comprehensive course offerings. Six or seven community schools should accept students only from their designated attendance boundary (no transfers in). This would increase socioeconomic and skill-level diversity across the system and ensure that each school has sufficient enrollment to sustain high quality, essential programs and courses.
- **Magnet schools** should offer open enrollment to all students in the district. Each should have a unique educational approach such as a smaller, more personalized size or a specific focus area, such as the arts or career-technical education. The model proposes three to six magnet schools, with enrollments ranging from 300 to 1,100 students.
- **Education options** — alternative schools and charters — should remain a strong part of the PPS High School System. Their location and offerings may be more strategically integrated into the system through the alternative school RFP (Request for Proposal) process or by stronger district relationships with charter sponsors.



How would this framework improve student outcomes and ensure that all schools are in high demand? There is no silver bullet that will address every concern; improvement in student outcomes will require a concerted effort on multiple fronts. Strong teaching is essential. While outside the scope of this design team, we note several important efforts to improve instruction, in particular Portland Public Schools’ work to develop professional learning communities, school-based teams of teachers and administrators who collaborate on strategies to increase success at their own schools. We also note the district’s efforts to support classroom teaching through new classroom materials, professional development and related

assessments and course guides. Those ongoing efforts, and others, directly support improved instruction in our classrooms.

The High School System Design effort focuses on the underlying structures that support teaching and learning: programs, course offerings, student assignment policies and practices, and school sizes and locations. Our recommendations, working in combination, should ensure that:

- **All students have equal access to the system’s array of programs and schools.** Ensuring that students have access to a diverse array of high school options that best meets their individual learning needs will contribute **toward closing the achievement gap**; in other words, ensuring more equitable achievement outcomes across socioeconomic, racial and ethnic lines.¹ These recommendations acknowledge that while traditional comprehensive schools work for many, they do not work for all of our students.
- **Students should be encouraged to find their “best fit.”** Under the model, students will have a guaranteed entrance to a comprehensive school in their community – and for many, having an array of courses with some degree of personalization close to home will be the right choice. But the model also provides for different learning approaches and for students to pursue their interests in depth. That allows students access to a “best fit” school that meets their individual learning strengths and which challenges even the highest achieving students with deep and rigorous coursework. Providing equitable access to a variety of schools — and supporting students with information as they plan their education — will **increase student engagement and improve graduation rates.**
- **All students have access to high quality, essential courses.** In general, higher poverty schools, which also tend to be underenrolled, cannot offer an equitable array of courses. Implementation of this plan would ensure that students have access to these courses within their community comprehensive school and with little to no cost. How? The school district distributes staffing based on the number of students enrolled. PPS’ liberal transfer policy coupled with declining enrollment has meant that certain schools have lost more teaching positions than others. With fewer teachers, they were less able to offer a range of courses beyond the basics required for graduation. Many families and students have said the limited course offerings make the schools less appealing — hastening the decline. This plan ensures that community schools are about the same size, which means each school would receive about the same number of teachers, which in turns would mean that each school could offer equity in courses. **This would help to ensure that all schools are in high demand by students and the community.**
- **Every school better reflects the diversity of the broader community — students of varying socioeconomic backgrounds and educational status (English language learners, special education, talented and gifted) are more equitably integrated across all campuses.** The effects of the neighborhood assignment combined with the school choice policy have skewed the demographics at many schools. Research has shown that PPS students who take advantage of the option to transfer are disproportionately well-off and higher achieving.² Also, we know that

¹ Nancy Martin and Samuel Halperin. *Whatever it Takes: How Twelve Communities are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth.* (American Youth Policy Forum. 2006).

² Research and Evaluation, Portland Public Schools: 2007-8

Portland’s neighborhoods are actually more socioeconomically diverse than enrollment in the schools serving those neighborhoods. By promoting strong neighborhood schools, PPS’ system experiences the added benefit of greater socioeconomic and skill-level diversity across the school system. This type of diversity has been shown to **increase graduation rates**.³

- **Community schools and magnet schools should include community partners on-site or nearby.** Whether in a rebuilt facility or an existing school building, PPS should seek partners in the community integrated into the campus space and school programs. The partners could include parent organizations, social service agencies, business and non-profit partners who contribute to the career pathways. These partnerships should be designed to support student interests and needs — and to **increase student engagement, close the achievement gap and ensure that all schools are in high demand**.⁴
- **Every school should personalize learning.** Whether through the ninth-grade academies incorporated into every community school, or through other strategies such as advisories and mentorships, every school should establish personal connections and support among the school, its students and their families. Whether they are struggling or high achieving, every student benefits from making a personal connection to teachers and their school that inspires them to do their best. Small schools and academy structures foster those connections, which **increase student engagement and improve graduation rates**.⁵

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Community schools key features

- a. Every student should have guaranteed access to a community school, each of which would serve a designated attendance area.
- b. Each community school should provide a comprehensive range of courses for students, and should serve as a hub of community activity for surrounding neighborhoods.
- c. Enrollment at community schools should be set between 1,100 and 1,400⁶ students (see the appendix for more detail). Because the size of these schools would be relatively equal, the quantity of programs across community schools should be similar as well. At this time, we envision six or seven community schools.

³ Harris, Douglas. *High Flying Schools, Student Disadvantage, and the Logic of NCLB*. (Florida State University. May 2007).

³ P. Goldschmidt J. Wang, *When can schools affect dropout behavior? A longitudinal multilevel analysis*. (American Educational Research Journal, 36(4)p715-738 1999)

³ Bazelon, Emily. *The Next Kind of Integration*. (New York Times. July 20, 2008).

³ FINDER, Alan. *As Test Scores Jump, Raleigh Credits Integration by Income*. (New York Times, September 25, 2005)

Anrig, Greg. *Educational Strategies that Work*. (The Century Foundation, March 2009)

⁴ Nancy Martin and Samuel Halperin. *Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth*. American Youth Policy Forum. 2006.

⁵ Horwitz, Amanda and Jason Snipes. *Supporting Successful Transitions to High School*. (The Council of the Great City Schools Research Brief, Spring 2008.)

⁶ This size range allows each community school to offer a range of electives in different interest areas – including music and the arts, advanced math, science, literature and history electives, world languages and career exploration electives. See the appendix for more detail.

- d. All community schools should offer a personalized learning environment for ninth-graders such as ninth-grade academies, advisories or mentoring programs. They must also implement strategies to support “academic priority” students (or those incoming freshman identified as most at risk to not graduate).
- e. Community schools should offer college-credit bearing opportunities, upper-level world language, college-level mathematics such as calculus or statistics, art, music, credit recovery options and programs to support struggling students. Community schools should also offer a similar array of career exploration electives. Variability in programs across community comprehensives should be both intentional and limited, as opposed to our current situation in which program variability is extreme and unintended.
- f. Because all community schools would offer equal educational programs, transfers across these schools should not be allowed.⁷

2. Magnet schools key features

- a. Portland Public Schools should offer a variety of districtwide magnet schools, with no attendance boundaries and no guaranteed placement, and open to all PPS students for application.
- b. The purpose of magnet schools is threefold: 1) to provide an element of specialization, serve a particular niche or offer a significantly different learning environment for PPS students; 2) to allow PPS to get the most impact out of programs that are more difficult to financially sustain, and 3) to serve as hubs of innovation. Magnet schools should be encouraged to adopt innovative practices with the potential to boost student achievement.
- c. Career pathways that are not offered at community schools should be offered in magnet schools.
- d. All students could apply to magnet schools but would not be guaranteed placement. While magnet schools should offer a unique or in-depth learning experience, they should be smaller in size (ranging from 300 to 1,100 students) and thus should not offer the wide range of courses available at community schools. By entering a magnet school, students should be required to give up some of the amenities and programs commonly associated with the “traditional” high school experience. Grade configuration might not necessarily be a four-year ninth-12th grade.
- e. Smaller magnet schools would require a different, more creative staffing structure so the program could be financially sustained. For example, teachers might need to have endorsements to teach multiple subjects, teacher-leaders might help lead the program or administrators might also teach, and administrative or shared costs might be shared across multiple programs or beyond the high school grades (such as in a K-12 school such as MLC or a 6-12 such as the Young Women’s Academy).

⁷ With the exception of hardship placements, to better serve special populations or when required by federal law.

- f. A strategy for how students enter magnet programs should be assessed. Slots into programs might be determined by some combination of geography, demographics (gender and socioeconomic balance, for example) and student interest and/or readiness.
- g. At a minimum, all students should have equitable access to resource intensive career-technical education (CTE) within a magnet school. The industrial and engineering pathway, for example, which includes construction, heavy manufacturing, auto mechanics, electrical engineering and the like, requires smaller class sizes and specific equipment and facilities.

3. Education options key features

PPS has a nationally recognized system of education options that includes community-based alternatives, district-based alternatives and charter schools. We recommend that education options continue to play an integral role within the system, particularly with the goal of enrolling disengaged youth who have not found their needs met in more traditional high schools. We also recommend that:

- a. PPS explore dual enrollment opportunities for students across education options and traditional schools;
- b. Education options programs continue to refine their respective missions and clearly identify the type of students who are best suited for their respective programs;
- c. PPS create a robust process to ensure that education options students are matched with the programs that best meet their individual needs;
- d. PPS continue to ensure students' academic growth through a rigorous curriculum and adherence to district standards.
- e. PPS develop online courses or programs and other innovative opportunities for students to supplement offerings at other schools.

MOVING FROM TODAY TOWARD THE FUTURE MODEL

Portland Public Schools currently has a collection of high schools and programs: alternatives, traditional schools, magnet programs, charter schools and small schools. There are strengths in that diversity, but also inequity. The “system” we have today is the result of decisions and developments over many decades, a jumble of well-intentioned actions and enthusiasms that nonetheless are not yielding the results we need for all of our students.

We also know that we do not offer all students an equitable opportunity to find the school best suited to their needs. Currently, students are assigned to small schools or to larger schools based on their address. Students who may have thrived in a more personal small school may be lost in a large high school. The small schools model has been implemented only in higher poverty neighborhoods; students in these neighborhoods who wish to attend a larger school have limited options to do so. We recommend that the smaller magnet schools be strategically located to be more accessible districtwide. We also recommend

that the community schools be located to be most accessible within their particular attendance area. This means change: Neither the small schools nor the larger schools now operating would be guaranteed to remain at their existing sites.

Moving from the status quo to the model outlined above would take time. There are familiar elements in our recommended model; we intentionally are building on the existing strengths of our schools. But every campus would face changes — in programs, in student assignment, in size — in the move toward the recommended model.

4. Moving forward with community schools

- a. PPS operates “comprehensive” neighborhood schools on seven campuses: Cleveland, Franklin, Grant, Jefferson, Lincoln, Madison and Wilson. (Benson is a magnet school, and the Roosevelt and Marshall campuses are each divided into three small schools). We recommend that the model include six or seven community schools — but not necessarily at those locations. PPS should assess the demographics, student achievement, transportation options and partnership opportunities to determine where the community schools should be located.
- b. PPS should evaluate the programs at community schools to ensure equity and to minimize variability. We recommend a more consistent range of course offerings; in some cases that would mean spinning off specialty programs to magnet schools, while in others it would mean new opportunities not previously offered in the neighborhood school.
- c. PPS should consider adopting a greater array of semester-long courses, instead of full-year courses, to bolster breadth of elective course offerings.

5. Moving forward with magnet schools

- a. We recommend that PPS build on the strong tradition of Benson’s career-technical programs and continue to operate a CTE program accessible to students districtwide. That program should focus on career pathways that are resource-intensive and facilities-dependent (and thus unlikely to be replicated across the community comprehensives).
- b. We recommend that PPS assess student and community interest for a highly specialized integrated visual and performing arts program and other magnet programs of interest to students and the community. The High School System Design Team has secured additional funding from the Voluntary Public School Choice Grant to conduct further research and gather input on programs of interest to students, in demand by employers and supported by the community.
- c. We recommend that PPS build on its strengths when developing magnet schools. While PPS might join partners in starting new magnets, they should also incorporate and build on the successes of some of our existing focus option programs, existing small schools and academies now operating within a larger campus. Many of our small schools have demonstrated positive gains in graduation rates and academic growth rates. We recommend that PPS explore which programs should be maintained to offer the foundation for a stand-alone program serving students from across the city.

- d. In order to ensure that all students have access to these opportunities, PPS would need to convert at least one and possibly more of its existing neighborhood high schools into magnet schools. Ideally, magnet schools should be on a major transportation line to maximize accessibility.

6. Moving forward with education options

- a. PPS should focus on increasing the equity of offerings across Portland's geographic regions, and specifically should take advantage of the RFP process for community-based alternatives in 2010 to do so.
- b. PPS should adopt a more proactive approach with potential charter sponsors. Rather than reacting to applications brought forward by community sponsors, PPS might work with potential sponsors so that charter schools could meet the district's hopes for program innovation, charter location and student needs.

SERVING ALL STUDENTS WITH EQUITY

In the transition to the new model, we recommend a focused effort to adjust the student assignment and enrollment process to allow all students equitable access to PPS programs and offerings. Each of the below recommendations has been mentioned repeatedly throughout the community, student and staff engagement processes, and should take a focused effort to carry out:

7. Boundaries. Attendance boundaries should be redrawn as part of the High School System Design process; the conversion of one or more current comprehensive campuses to magnet schools would necessitate this. Attendance boundaries would be reviewed periodically to ensure that socioeconomic diversity across the school system was maximized to the greatest extent possible given geographic realities. The Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Enrollment and Transfer is one external group that could potentially provide analysis and advice related to this function.

8. Admission to magnet schools. PPS should develop a new strategy for assigning students to magnet schools. Enrollment and demographic patterns within magnet schools would also be reviewed periodically to ensure that the desired diversity balance and enrollment numbers was achieved. Again, the Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Enrollment and Transfer is one external group that could potentially review this issue and offer advice to the Superintendent.

9. Special populations. There should be equitable distribution of special populations, such as special education, English language learners, talented and gifted, and academic priority students throughout the system; where there is difference in distribution of these students, there should be educational rationale.

- a. An outside review of special education services will produce findings this summer, at which point the High School System Design Team can make more concrete recommendations regarding the distribution of these students.

- b. Disallowing transfers across community schools should result in a more equitable distribution of “non-academic priority” (or those students on track to graduate), to the extent possible within current demographic realities in Portland.

ISSUES TO EXPLORE AND RESOLVE

10. College-credit bearing courses. We recommend that PPS assess its college-credit bearing programs including International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement and Dual Credit. As we look to make such rigorous courses accessible to all students, we need to determine which programs merit greater investment and where they should be located. In this assessment, PPS must analyze the cost effectiveness of these programs, whether the programs result in equitable outcomes and whether they are equally accessible to all students. We must also understand if the programs are truly equivalent in rigor and cost. The High School System Design Team recognizes that IB, for example, is currently not equally accessible to all students; if this program is deemed significantly different from either AP or Dual Credit in either rigor or cost, it would be most equitable for it to be located in a magnet school, as a magnet program or if financially feasible, at all schools.

11. K-12 integration. Articulation of K-8 and middle school programs to high school must be assessed and integrated into the redesign effort. These include language immersion, IB and specific career pathway programs, such as arts or environmental studies. We also recommend a further assessment of the strengths of the new K-8 programs and PPS middle schools in their effectiveness in preparing students for high school. We recommend that PPS continue ongoing initiatives to ensure that students are better prepared upon entering high school. Some of these efforts include the eighth- to ninth-grade transition effort, the district’s Milestones Framework and a focus on professional learning communities at the K-8 level.

12. Partnership development and parent involvement. Schools should leverage strong partnerships with surrounding cultural institutions, social service and health agencies, businesses, private foundations, parents, public agencies and other educational institutions because these partnerships have the ability to boost achievement and engagement for all students and especially those most vulnerable of not graduating. Capitalizing on partnerships and increasing parent involvement is one of the most important strategies for closing the achievement gap.

13. Funding. While PPS must proactively implement policies that seek to integrate the school system on socioeconomic lines, we also recognize that Portland’s residence patterns make it unlikely that any attendance boundaries could be drawn to give all community schools the same mix of income levels. Given this reality, we recommend that PPS explore the implementation of a weighted student funding formula. This formula would recognize that certain students need more support and attention to stay on track to graduate. In particular, PPS should assign more funding to students designated as “academic priority” because of their high number of absences, low performance on state benchmarks or course failures in middle school. Schools that have greater numbers of academic priority students would receive greater staffing to provide support needed to ensure that students graduate.

14. Instructional time. The research is clear that increasing the time available for instruction — the time between students and quality teachers — increases achievement. We need to explore what changes or increases to the school calendar will demonstrate the greatest impact on achievement, particularly for

students who are disproportionately not achieving well. For example, year-round, staggered schedules, late arrivals, trimesters, an extended day and increased evening opportunities should be assessed for their ability to improve student achievement and engagement. These opportunities must be assessed for grades K-8 as well.

15. Teaching quality. PPS should undertake a human capital initiative that explores strategies to ensure that high-needs students are matched with an equitable allocation of experienced and high quality teachers and principals. Once we tackle equity of access to courses and programs, our next step is to tackle equity of access to quality instruction and to a rigorous, college-preparatory coursework. We recommend that PPS launch an initiative to implement culturally competent instructional practices within school buildings. These strategies should be adopted for grades K-8 as well.

16. Interscholastic competition. Each community school should field teams for interscholastic competition, in sports, debate, dance and other PIL activities. We currently support different models for athletic competition. Larger neighborhood high schools and our largest magnet school (Benson) field their own teams, small schools that share a campus field teams jointly, and high school students at MLC returning to their home campuses for athletic participation. We recommend that a work group establish guidelines for interscholastic competition by students in magnet schools under the new model.

BUILDING TOWARD OUR FUTURE HIGH SCHOOLS

Portland Public Schools can and should move toward this more equitable model of community schools and magnets, no matter what the condition of its buildings. However, we know that the buildings housing our high schools are all in need of serious attention. They are old, and their systems are wearing out; they waste energy and resources; and their spaces do not support the teamwork, hands-on learning and modern technology our students need.

Last year, Portland Public Schools delayed its work on a long-range facilities plan while the high school design work was under way. The Portland School Board did not want the buildings determining the programs; rather, the educational program needs should define the capital needs.

17. 21st century facilities. With the endorsement of a model as proposed, we recommend that PPS move forward with the long-range facilities plan, with board adoption this fall, and the referral of a facilities bond measure for voter approval in May. We recommend that the bond measure include renovation or new buildings of *two to four* high schools as the first step toward rebuilding all high schools. Rebuilding high school facilities could be a catalyst for improvement as PPS moves toward the new model, improving the programs and opportunities provided to our students, attracting enrollment to the new schools and contributing toward the closing of the achievement gap.

- a. Generally, school programs, students and staff would move off a campus temporarily while the building was rebuilt. That could give the district time to reassess the programs to make them more rigorous and relevant. When a school building reopened, it could do so with appealing programs and staff inspired by the new school. This might be particularly helpful to currently underenrolled schools.

- b. Assuming that a campus would be temporarily off-line and out-of-service while it was rebuilt, PPS could relieve some of the pressure of declining enrollment through strategic use of shared swing space. High school enrollment is projected to drop until 2015, and then begins to trend upwards, returning to current enrollment (about 13,000) in 2021.
- c. Facilities are an expression of positive regard for both teachers and students. Providing a higher quality teaching and learning environment for students and teachers sends the message that they are valued.
- d. Newer facilities can provide learning spaces that encourage relationship-building and collaboration among staff and students. Best practices indicate that collaboration among teachers is essential to improving student achievement.
- e. Facilities can promote partnership if they are constructed in a way that invites co-location with other organizations or agencies. Co-location with community centers, businesses, libraries, cultural institutions, postsecondary institutions, health and social service agencies, community gardens and the like all have the potential to expand a student's postsecondary readiness and increase parent involvement. More affluent families often provide after-school and extracurricular activities for their children; these activities are not always available to other students. These differences can contribute to an achievement gap between poor and affluent students, especially when one considers that students spend *at most* 17 percent of their awake hours each calendar year in the classroom.⁸

THE IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS (JULY - NOVEMBER)

In late September, the High School Design Team will present a more detailed plan. The components of this plan include:

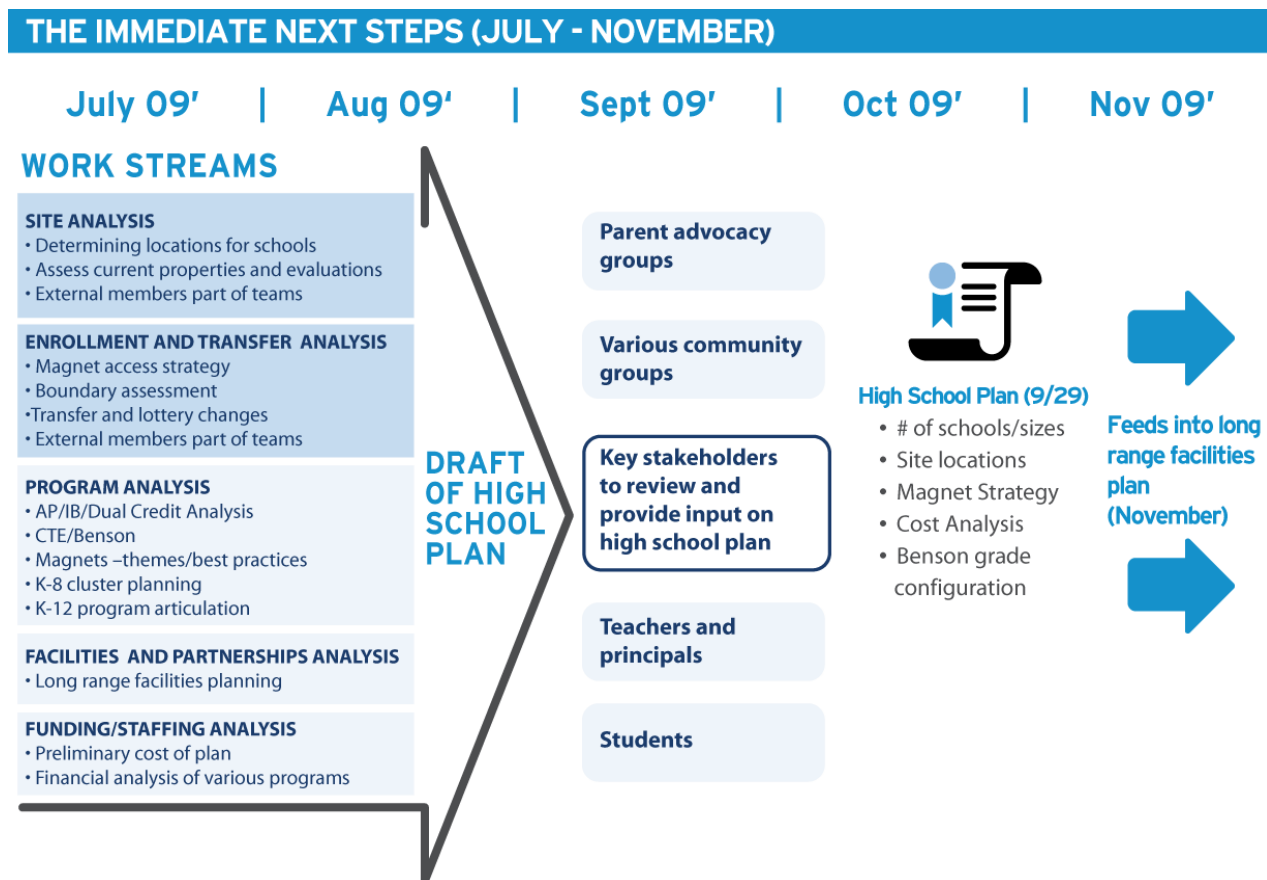
- *Number and size of schools* – The High School System Design Team has recommended six or seven community schools and three to six magnet schools. By late September, the Design Team will recommend a specific number for both community and magnet schools. We will also narrow the range of enrollment sizes for the community school.
- *Identification of locations and programs at specific schools* – Throughout the summer and early fall, PPS will convene a group of community members and experts from external agencies to assess the locations of specific schools. This group may include city planners, representatives from mass transit, architects, parents and students. This group's charge is to help PPS determine optimal sites for its magnet programs, community schools and education options. The group will be asked to develop a set of recommendations by early September.
- *Magnet school plan* – An overall magnet school plan will be developed, which will include: themes of some magnet schools, research containing national best practices regarding magnet schools, reflection on lessons learned from small schools implementation, a decision about Benson's grade configuration and a process for how to

⁸ Wilhelmi, John. Portland Public Schools, 2008

proceed with magnet conversions. To help gauge interest in possible magnet themes and approaches, PPS will conduct focus groups with parents and students in early September. That will help ensure that not only are the magnets educationally sound, but they will be in high demand among students.

- *More detail around enrollment and transfer parameters and timeline* – Given the above changes, a planning process and timeline will be developed regarding enrollment and transfer. PPS will also ask the Superintendent’s Advisory Committee on Enrollment and Transfer to assist with this process.
- *Estimated budget/cost of plan* – An estimate of key cost savings and expenditures resulting from the plan will be presented.
- *Backup research and analysis supporting the overall plan* – In order to develop the above recommendations, a host of analysis requires completion. Further analysis of the cost structure of 1) CTE, 2) IB, AP and Dual Credit and 3) a review of the special education audit is among the work that must be incorporated.

In the diagram below, we have outlined the most immediate next steps. There will be five key work-streams, each which has defined tasks and owners. The collective effort of these teams will be integrated in the more detailed plan as outlined above. The detailed plan will first be vetted with a teacher and principal advisory committee and several community and parent stakeholder groups. The High School System Design Team will also conduct focus groups with parents and students to determine interest in specific magnet programs and themes.



LONG-TERM GAME PLAN (NEXT SIX YEARS)

From the perspective of parents and students we expect to see the following:

School Year	Components
2009-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High school plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Release of detailed plans, community engagement, board approval ▪ Plan should include the opening of <i>at least</i> one magnet program, and which of the small schools should convert to magnets. Requires board approval - Development of partnerships - Long range facilities plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Release of plan, community engagement and board approval - Enrollment and transfer planning process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Release of detailed plans, community engagement, board approval ▪ Boundary changes - Capital bond (ideally, 2-4 high schools named); optimally occurring in May 2010
2010-2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High School Plan implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One or several magnet schools open ▪ Selected existing small schools up and running in alternate locations ▪ Ninth grade academies or other personalized learning environments for ninth graders implemented ▪ Academic priority students weighted within funding formula - RFP process for community-based alternatives - Enrollment and Transfer Plan implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student assignment changes begin to be phased in ▪ Boundary changes begin to be phased in - Long Range Facilities Plan implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community engagement – facilities design ▪ Design plan
2011-2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued changes to student assignment policy and boundaries - Facility design continues
2012-2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued changes to enrollment and transfer policy - Facility construction begins

	- Students may move to other schools while facility to be rebuilt is offline.
2013-2014	- Continued changes to enrollment and transfer policy
2013-2014	- Facilities open - Enrollment and transfer changes complete

We believe that implementing the above recommendations will in fact lead to increased graduation rates, increased student engagement and a reduction in the achievement gap. We also believe that we can create a system that significantly reduces unintended enrollment disparities across schools and specifically, one in which, all of our schools are considered strong, high quality options.

Sincerely,

The High School System Design Team

Co-leads: Sarah Singer and John Wilhelmi

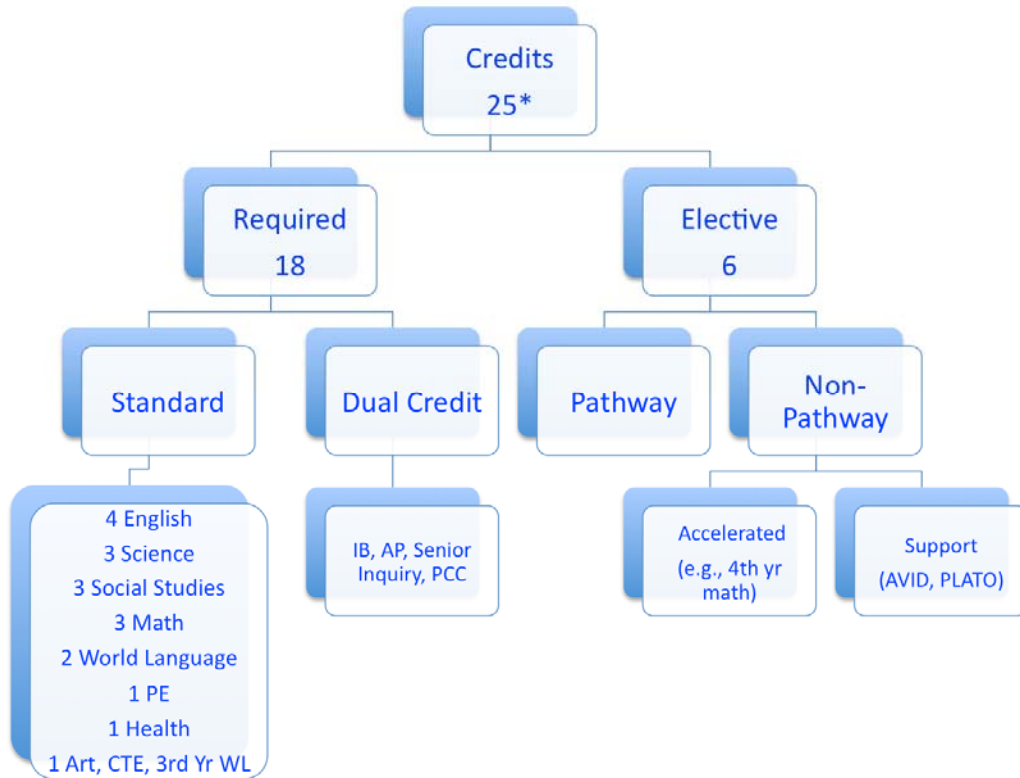
Executive sponsors: Toni Hunter and Zeke Smith

Team members: Sara Allan, Sarah Carlin Ames, Marcia Arganbright, Judy Brennan, Robb Cowie, Charles Hopson, Kurt Jun, CJ Sylvester, Jenni Villano, Greg Wolleck

APPENDIX I: INFORMATION ON SCHOOL SIZE: METHODOLOGY

The High School System Design Team determined that community school should be between 1,100 and 1,400 students. (By early fall, we will narrow this range). We used the following methodology to calculate school size for community schools. (The diagram below is meant to enhance the reader's understanding of the basic concepts).

Graduation Requirements Diagram



- a. **Calculate the number of teachers allotted to a school with a particular size given the current staffing ratio.** School curricular program is a function of student enrollment. At PPS, teachers are allocated at the high school level at a ratio of 1 fulltime employee (FTE) per 22.9 students. Approximately 10 percent of a school’s instructional FTE is allocated to non-classroom positions such as campus security monitors, bookkeepers, data clerks, attendance secretaries, librarians, etc.⁹ Thus, classroom FTE can be calculated by dividing a school’s enrollment by 22.9, then subtracting 10 percent from this number.
- b. **Determine the number of sections each school can offer given the number of teachers it has been allotted.** Most PPS high schools currently run a seven-period day. Teachers generally teach five classes, and have one planning period and one duty period. Thus, a school’s total course sections can be determined by taking classroom FTE and multiplying it by 5. Note: Sections and courses are different. A course can have from one to several sections (e.g., 1 section of second-year calculus, nine sections of freshman English)
- c. **Determine how many of these sections are required and how many are elective.** With a seven-period schedule, a student can take 28 courses over four years and earn 28 credits (although she or he only needs 25 credits to graduate). Of the 28 courses, 18 are required courses and 10 are elective courses. A student must pass all 18 required classes to earn a diploma. A student can pass as few as six elective courses and still earn a diploma
- d. **Organize electives by grouping them into categories; sum up total sections per category.** One category of electives includes Career Pathways; pathways are groupings of similar electives that have a programmatic theme such as the arts or business. (There are a total of six Career Pathway categories). Another category of electives include support or remedial course such as AVID or Bridges to Algebra. A third category includes “advanced courses”; some advanced work can also fall within the required domain.
- e. **Determine the appropriate percentage of sections to be offering in the support/advanced and Career Pathway categories.** Because we were attempting to determine the right size for a larger community school, the High School System Design Team took the average of three of our larger existing comprehensive schools and found that about 15 percent of electives are devoted to support or advanced courses.¹⁰ The remaining 85 percent of electives are aligned to a pathway.
- f. **Determine how many courses and sections are needed to provide a robust pathway.** In order to provide a robust pathway with some level of depth and choice, a school should offer about five to seven courses per pathway. (Some magnet schools that specialize in a particular pathway would likely offer more). This number was calculated by reviewing master schedules of surrounding high schools in Oregon (i.e., Forest Grove, Milwaukie, Center for Advanced Learning, David Douglas, Putnam, etc.) and determining what courses these schools offered in each career pathway. We also cross-referenced this information with input we had received from more than 80 employers at the

⁹ This does not include principals, vice-principals and counselors, who are accounted for in a separate allocation within the staffing formula.

¹⁰ Advanced courses include any fourth credit of math, science and social studies. It also includes higher level world languages (5/6 or above) and any world language offered once two languages have already been provided.

Career Pathway Summit, in which employers mapped which industry specific skills they found most useful for entry level employees to have. Each course should offer about two sections each (this number was calculated by taking the average number of sections per course at existing comprehensive schools).

- g. Determine how many and which pathways each school should offer, taking into consideration other factors. Also, determine how many courses should be offered within each pathway.**

Because students would not be allowed to transfer from one community school to another, community schools should have parity in the pathway domain. While providing six pathways offers students a great deal of choice, it also significantly increases school size. As enrollment increased, personalization and campus climate could be compromised. The High School System Design Team is also concerned that a school too large would necessitate a campus closure elsewhere, which could potentially disenfranchise a Portland community.

CONCLUSIONS – THE SIZE OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The size of community schools would be dependent on two key decisions: how many pathways each community school offered and how many courses per pathway each school offered.

How many pathways should each community school offer? Although more analysis is needed, the Design Team at this point believes that offering between four and five pathways is sufficient. If a student is passionate about a pathway not offered at his or her community school, s/he can transfer to a magnet school to access this pathway. In some cases, the student could also participate in career exploration opportunities that arose during and after school, such as the ACE mentoring program. Opportunities during the summer months could be another way to gain exposure to specific industry fields not offered at one’s community school.

How many courses per pathway should each school offer? As stated above, in order to provide a robust pathway with some level of depth and choice, a school should offer about five-seven courses per pathway. Five courses per pathway yields the below results:

FIVE COURSES PER PATHWAY

Enrollment	FTE	Inst FTE	Sections	Required Sec	Elective Sec	Non-Path Sec	Path Elec Sec	Pathways
300	13	12	59	38	21	9	12	1
400	17	16	79	51	28	12	16	2
500	22	20	98	63	35	15	20	2
600	26	24	118	76	42	18	24	2
700	31	28	138	88	49	21	28	3
800	35	31	157	101	56	24	33	3
900	39	35	177	114	63	27	37	4
1000	44	39	197	126	70	29	41	4
1100	48	43	216	139	77	32	45	4
1200	52	47	236	152	84	35	49	5
1300	57	51	255	164	91	38	53	5
1400	61	55	275	177	98	41	57	6
1500	66	59	295	189	105	44	61	6
1600	70	63	314	202	112	47	65	6
1700	74	67	334	215	119	50	69	6
1800	79	71	354	227	126	53	73	6
1900	83	75	373	240	133	56	77	6
2000	87	79	393	253	140	59	81	6

Thus, at five courses per pathway, a school with 1,300 students would be able to provide five of six pathways. The other pathways would need to be provided in some form at a magnet school.

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1800	79	71	354	227	126	53	73	6
1900	83	75	373	240	133	56	77	6
2000	87	79	393	253	140	59	81	7

Similarly, at six courses per pathway, a school with 1,300 students would be able to provide four of six pathways. The other two pathways would need to be provided in some form at a magnet school.

During the community engagement sessions held with the Portland community, it appeared that most Portlanders preferred less depth and more breadth in programmatic offerings. Using this logic, it would appear that assuming five courses per pathway would better reflect findings from the community sessions. However, as stated above, the High School System Design Team, will spend the summer months further refining its assumptions and analysis.