



## **High Expectations:**

### **Transforming High School for Springfield's Future**

By Scott Spears

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#### Preface

The high school of today is fundamentally little different than the one which I attended, or indeed, that which my parents attended. If one were to spend time following a typical student on a typical day in 2002, one might have an experience very like mine at South High School in the early 60's, and my parents might have had in the early 40's. With the possible exception of more recent technologies currently used basically to leverage the black boards of my era, the same instructional strategies, attitudes toward the work of students, behavioral control issues, movement through the day, and emphasis on peer culture and varsity sports are applicable across almost one hundred years of American high schools.

My unvarnished observation is that we have attempted to improve around the edges through the introduction of some new technologies and programming. We have not openly and undefensively challenged the deep, mostly unexamined, rhythms and routines that are deeply rooted in history and pervasive in practice to this day in our high schools. Our use of time, scheduling procedures, leveling of classes, extracurricular programs, administrative staffing patterns, personnel distribution, and emphasis on athletics, while tweaked over time, differ remarkably little from high schools one might have visited in the forties, thirties, or even earlier.

For most of its history, the high school has sorted students into those academically able to go on to college, and those who needed to prepare for the workplace immediately after high school. In a society in which jobs that permitted a person with a high school education to provide relatively well for oneself and one's family, this was not an unuseful format for providing the workforce of the future. We must remind ourselves that in the late 40's and early 50's, the drop out rate of American high schools hovered around 50%. Today, we find this unacceptable because those

who drop out without even a high school education find no jobs that will provide family-supporting income and benefits. Even the diploma can be seen only as the ticket to the next level of education, not the terminal credential it once was for many. In the agricultural age, postsecondary education was a pipe dream for most Americans. In the industrial age it was the birthright of only a few. By the space age, it became common for many. Today, it is just common sense for all. —*National Commission on the High School Senior Year*. (October 2001)

Students today are growing up in a school environment that is not consistent with their or our society's needs. High school students are responding to this disconnect through a disturbingly high level of disengagement from our schools by going through the motions of the school day to get to the more important social aspects of their peer groups after school hours. This is especially true of our seniors, who are ready to engage the future in exciting and mature ways, but are kept servant to the same control structures, seat time requirements, and teaching methodologies as are visited upon underclassmen. It is as if the real stuff must be saved for college and work, not reflected in the programming of high schools as preparation for that future. I believe that so many of our high school students find employment today not only to finance their automobiles and fashions, but to become part of a world more real to them — where they are treated as responsible young adults.

I am convinced that our high schools must change in substantial ways — more agile in developing customized programming to meet broad ranges of student need and desires, more personal in the design of educational plans and pathways for students, less bound by constraints of time and place, and more focused on results. For Springfield, we need high schools where all students find success and are prepared for futures after high school. We simply are not there yet. While many students are doing well in our schools (on traditional measures), many more are not. Our drop out rate is embarrassingly high and far too many students do not seek education beyond the diploma. If we do nothing, the competition will overcome us all. From charter schools, private religious education, and home schooling, to web-based academies, options for students to choose other than the public schools are becoming more and more viable. More students will leave us in an effort to meet their needs in ways that we seem so unwilling to consider. Until we are willing to challenge ourselves to consider change in substantial ways, we are in danger of losing the opportunity to strengthen the last great democratizing institution of this nation. This is not a scholarly paper and is not intended as such, although I cite references and sources of my current thinking. This is a personal recitation of where I believe we must go. Section One of this paper explores current thinking about high school renewal. Such an exploration is gaining steam all across this country. This is not an issue isolated to Springfield, Ohio. Section Two explores data related to student success in our high schools, and makes the case for a fresh look

at what we are about. The final sections, Section Three and Four, describe a new vision for Springfield City Schools. In ways fairly radical, but hopefully in ways honoring the best of the heritage of our schools, this new vision should raise deep questions and promote broad discussions about what we can become.

But time is of the essence. And we need not reinvent the wheel. We must be open to new ways of seeing and seeing new ways. I believe that this is a fertile and exciting time of renewal. As George Wood, in *Schools That Work* (1992), has so eloquently put it:

High school is democracy's finishing school — the last shared experience that all Americans will enjoy, the place where skills and dispositions that citizens in a democracy need should be secured and nurtured in all of our youth. Our children leave high school as fully enfranchised citizens, not only able to take a job or go to college, but also to vote, to engage in discussion over public issues, to buy the house next door, to become our neighbors. To live up to this task, the place we call high school should...teach each student, through example, what it means to be part of a democratic community. (38)

The urgency for change is compelling to me. My passion is that we design teaching and learning environments in which all of our students-- rich and poor, majority and minority, male and female-- find success in preparation for participation as full partners in our democratic society. In *Rethinking High School* (2001), the authors, all high school teachers and parents of high school students, conclude the following:

In popular culture, adolescence is routinely depicted as a wholly negative time, a stretch of misery, a struggle and a curse. Those of us who work with teenagers everyday reject this toxic stereotype. Of course, these years can be hard, damn hard, even heartbreaking at times. But adolescence is also suffused with amazing, joyful, exhilarating possibilities: deep friendship, powerful ties, reaching toward the new, trying on and discarding possible identities, coming into possession of your powers as a physical body and a thinking person. And let's not forget music and laughter and dancing and, maybe, falling in love a time or two.

Today, too many of these exciting, crucial, transforming, and joyful moments of adolescent life happen outside of school or in spite of school. Is that how we want it?

I, for one, do not.

### Section I: High School Renewal-- A National Perspective

I do not argue in this paper that high schools across the nation, and particularly in Springfield, are failing. I argue that, in their present form, they are *obsolete*. In moving from an industrial-age institution designed to sort kids for their roles in the future society to a schooling experience

designed to educate all students to a high standard, I argue that the mission has changed and the historical role of high school is radically altered. It offers an inadequate solution to the problem of how best to motivate and educate American adolescents. (Botstein, 1997) Yet we seem bound to tweak an organization for incremental improvements, rather than attempt to envision a system consistent with a new mission. As institutions, high schools are profoundly, frustratingly intractable. They seem to shrug off all criticism, squirm out from under all indictments, and repel all change. Change in high schools seems to unfold in geologic time. Even the field from which the factory model [the current design of high schools from the 1920's] was borrowed assembly line manufacturing has long since moved on to more effective patterns of organization. (Daniels, Bizar, Zemelman, 2001)

The platitude that students are not like they used to be turns out to be very true. Ages of maturation have dropped steadily over the last several decades. The blunt fact is that the American high school [one hundred years ago] was designed for fifteen-to-eighteen-year olds who were children only beginning their journey to adulthood. It is now filled with young adults of the same age. (Botstein, 1997) The sophomore today is much more like the senior of the 1950 s. We must be continually reminded that the drop-out rate from American high schools in the late forties and early fifties (the golden age of high schools) hovered around fifty percent! And today s seniors are much more advanced physiologically and socially than the seniors of earlier years. Still, we persist in imposing a now-ancient (at least in the minds of students!) structure on students who are very unlike the small group of students for which it was originally designed and who succeeded within it.

In other ways, high schools as currently operating are a cultural artifact left behind by a changing economy. The high-paying, family-supporting jobs of the future are found now in the information and technology sectors. Fewer and fewer jobs such as those found in the manufacturing sector and requiring only a high school diploma will be available. Students who do not emerge from high school prepared to be successful in the new economy will be relegated to life-long underemployment in low paying, no-benefit, mostly part-time jobs in the service sector.

In the face of these challenges, the call has gone up to re-design, re-invent, reform, and/or renew the American high school. Blue ribbon commissions have been seated. Reports have been issued. New models piloted. New ideas tried. Foundation's funding aimed toward new designs. Even Bill Gates is in the act. Beginning with the highly influential U.S. Department of Labor Report titled *The Secretary's Commission on Achieving the Necessary Skills (SCANS)* that outlined what high school graduates should know and be able to do as effective citizens, workers, and parents, through the National Association of Secondary School Principals *Breaking Ranks* in

1996, to the most recent reports from Education Week on *High School: the Shifting Mission* (2001) and the late 2001 release of *Raising Our Sights, No High School Senior Left Behind* by the National Commission on the High School Senior Year, and much literature in between, high school design is now on the front burner.

Careful reading of these reports and others yields a generic set of best practices that offer a roadmap for the renewal of our high schools. In listing these practices, I acknowledge their seeming common-sense flavor. However, I challenge any investigator of high school practices in Springfield City Schools to discover any intentional, systemic and systematic implementation of these concepts. Certainly, pieces of these practices are being tried (what we now term random acts of improvement), and some of the practices, such as Pathways and expansion of Tech Prep programming are entirely consistent with national recommendations. Until these efforts are fit into a comprehensive renewal strategy, they probably will not bear the intended fruit.

#### **Purposes of High Schools:**

- High school is, above all, a learning community and each school must commit itself to expecting demonstrated academic achievement for every student in accord with standards that can stand up to national scrutiny.
- High school must function as a transitional experience, getting each student ready for the next stage of life, whatever it may be for that individual, with the understanding that, ultimately, each person needs to earn a living.
- High school must be a gateway to multiple options.
- High school must prepare each student to be a lifelong learner.
- High school must provide an underpinning for good citizenship and for full participation in the life of our democracy.
- High school must play a role in the personal development of young people as social beings who have needs beyond those that are strictly academic.
- High school must lay a foundation for students to be able to participate comfortably in an increasingly technological society.
- High school must equip young people for life in a country and world in which interdependency will link their destiny to that of others, however different those others may be from them.
- High school must be an institution that unabashedly advocates on behalf of young people.  
(from *Breaking Ranks, Changing An American Institution*, p. 2)

#### **Best Practices for Renewal of High Schools:**

### *Personalized Learning Environments*

High schools must divide themselves into smaller units of students, teachers should use a variety of instructional strategies that accommodate individual learning styles, and every student should have a personal adult advocate and a personal plan for progress. Personalization of instruction and learning is the effort on the part of a school to organize the learning environment to take into account individual student characteristics and needs and to make use of flexible instructional practices. (Keefe and Jenkins, 2002)

### *Smaller Learning Communities*

Research is clear, especially in an urban high school, that smaller is better. Even in schools with large enrollments, arrangements are found to make the experience smaller for students through house organizations, schools within schools, or program clusters that keep students from falling through cracks and ensure that each child can be noticed.

### *Pathways*

The curriculum of high schools employing Pathways is organized around occupational clusters so that students who elect areas of study based upon their own interests engage coursework related to those interests. In high schools organized in this way, one typically finds students in College Prep, Tech Prep, or Career Tech (vocational) programs that lead to postsecondary education and/or training. In this way, all students are in programs that result in something after high school, and no student is in a general track that leads to neither college nor work.

### *Ninth Grade Academies*

In many high school renewal efforts, special programs are designed to ease the transition from middle to high school. Most often, ninth graders are organized in teams with a common set of teachers and curricular programs that prepare them for success in subsequent years of high schools. Ninth and Tenth grade are often seen as a lower house, with the junior and senior years seen as the upper house of school organization. In the ninth grade year, emphasis is placed on mastering the basic skills necessary for later success.

### *Re-designed Senior Year*

The senior year is designed to be the culmination of primary and secondary education, with clearly articulated standards for leaving school, for which students should have been preparing for four or more years. Through engaging studies, authentic experiences, flexible learning arrangements, and planned transitions to post-secondary education or work, senioritis turns into an opportunity to enjoy a powerful boost into the future.

### *More (and more rigorous) Alternatives*

More and different opportunities for student learning are available to all students, but tied to high standards of performance. From internet-based learning to community-based opportunities, the constraints of seat-time, time of day, and place are replaced with high-powered alternative arrangements customized to fit small groups or individual students.

### *Use of Time*

The traditional period schedule is redefined by appropriate uses of time for varying purposes. Some courses may be block scheduled for longer periods to accommodate deeper learning, and some courses or experiences may be offered in the evenings or on weekends. When new buildings are completed and the high school buildings renovated, learning across the calendar will allow opportunities for further design.

### *Teaching and Learning Relationships*

The teaching and learning in the high school becomes more learner centered while increasing the rigor for all students. The student-teacher relationship is seen as more collaborative, with teachers acting more as coaches and advisors than as presenters of information. Since learning arrangements may differ and each student possesses a personal learning plan, more customization for students is possible.

### *Experiential Learning*

Learning is geared toward application. Teachers are seen as designers of student work and coaches as to how well the work is being done. Application does not connote reduced rigor. Indeed, successful real-world application of knowledge requires high levels of rigor.

### *Assessment*

Assessment of learning occurs in a number of ways not limited to teacher-made tests, end of term examinations or state-mandated tests. Authentic assessment, providing evidence of the capability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world problems, provides students with opportunities to connect all their learning. Teachers are skilled diagnosticians of student learning difficulties and can prescribe alternative methods of learning for hard-to-master content. Students understand how to track their own learning goals that appear in a personal educational plan.

### **Characteristics of High-Performing Schools:** (Toch, 1999)

In 1999, U.S. News and the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center (NORC) reported their analysis of 1,053 high schools in six major metropolitan areas: Detroit, Boston,

Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Atlanta, and New York. Specifically, researchers looked for schools that showed high academic achievement after adjusting for family circumstances. Using a value-added statistical model to counter students' socioeconomic effects, NORC researchers found 96 schools where students show steady progress toward high academic standards where every student counts. The following is the list of the characteristics found to be common to those schools.

#### *Challenging Curriculum*

- Students are required to take rigorous courses, such as trigonometry, calculus, and foreign languages.
- Classes are small and heterogeneously grouped.
- Classes are taught in longer blocks of time.

#### *Professional Respect*

- Principals make administrative decisions, control budgets, hire and fire teachers, and establish curriculum.
- More building staff members are involved in teaching than in support services.
- Teachers find ways to have common planning time.

#### *Quality Teaching*

- Top-notch teachers refuse to make excuses for students who aren't learning.
- Teachers are deeply grounded in the subjects they teach, know how to match teaching styles to student learning styles, and care intensely about students.
- Teachers work with students to master core curriculum and transfer learning to real-world situations, rather than emphasizing high test scores.
- Teachers use data to decide what instructional changes are needed.

#### *Positive School Climate*

- School officials and teachers respect and care about students.
- Teachers and administrators expect students to achieve at high levels.
- Administrators and teachers know every student well and rescue kids the moment they slip a notch.
- The school environment is safe and orderly.

#### *Clear Mission*

- Teachers, students, parents, and the community share a clear vision that is centered on student achievement.

## Section 2: Current Status of High Schools

### **Local Report Card Comparisons (2001 data):**

	North	South	State Ave.
Attendance Rate (%)	92.6	88.1	93.9
Student Graduation Rate (%)	60.0	60.0	74.8
High School Courses Taught by Teachers with Appropriate Certificates (%)	96.6	95.6	97.4
CORE Courses Taught by Teacher with Appropriate Certification (%)	97.5	95.7	97.6
Teacher Attendance Rate (%)	95.9	95.9	95.3
Average Teacher Salary	\$36,738	\$36,999	\$42,995
Student Mobility (%)			
Students in school more than _ year	86.2	84.8	
Students in school less than _ year	13.8	15.2	
Enrollment			
Gender			
Male	642	573	
Female	669	583	
Ethnicity			
African American	218	508	
Asian	19	-	
Hispanic	14	-	
Multi-Racial	11	13	
White	1,046	625	
School Expenditures, per pupil	\$7,474	\$7,783	

(instruction, building operations,  
administration, pupil support, staff  
support)

**Test Data**

**Percentage of Students Who Passed the Proficiency Tests  
North High School  
2000-2001**

	North			State Standard*			SCS			State s Results		
	9 <sup>th1</sup>	9 <sup>th2</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th1</sup>	9 <sup>th2</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th1</sup>	9 <sup>th2</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th1</sup>	9 <sup>th2</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
Citizenship 71.6	72.8	<b>90.3</b>	<b>67.0</b>	75.0	85.0	60.0	64.0	77.9	59.2	82.5	91.0	
Mathematics 61.9	55.0	74.4	52.4	75.0	85.0	60.0	45.7	58.5	43.7	72.5	83.4	
Reading 74.1	<b>84.1</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>67.3</b>	75.0	85.0	60.0	<b>78.4</b>	<b>87.0</b>	<b>63.1</b>	90.5	95.9	
Writing 87.8	<b>83.5</b>	<b>95.5</b>	<b>86.2</b>	75.0	85.0	60.0	<b>77.6</b>	<b>88.8</b>	<b>78.7</b>	91.6	96.7	
Science 70.8	66.3	<b>85.8</b>	59.8	75.0	85.0	60.0	56.1	68.9	54.2	78.1	87.9	

<sup>1</sup> based on cumulative attempts for ninth grade students      <sup>2</sup> Based on cumulative attempts for tenth grade students  
\*Minimum percentage of students who must pass the test for the district to meet the standard      (bold) Meeting the state standard

**Percentage of Students Who Passed the Proficiency Tests  
South High School  
2000-2001**

	South			State Standard*			SCS			State s Results		
	9 <sup>th1</sup>	9 <sup>th2</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th1</sup>	9 <sup>th2</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th1</sup>	9 <sup>th2</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th1</sup>	9 <sup>th2</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
Citizenship 71.6	58.2	78.0	50.0	75.0	85.0	60.0	64.0	77.9	59.2	82.5	91.0	
Mathematics 61.9	39.6	54.7	33.1	75.0	85.0	60.0	45.7	58.5	43.7	72.5	83.4	
Reading 74.1	75.3	<b>87.1</b>	59.7	75.0	85.0	60.0	<b>78.4</b>	<b>87.0</b>	<b>63.1</b>	90.5	95.9	
Writing 87.8	<b>75.1</b>	<b>89.7</b>	<b>69.1</b>	75.0	85.0	60.0	<b>77.6</b>	<b>88.8</b>	<b>78.7</b>	91.6	96.7	
Science 70.8	49.1	64.2	48.9	75.0	85.0	60.0	56.1	68.9	54.2	78.1	87.9	

<sup>1</sup> based on cumulative attempts for ninth grade students      <sup>2</sup> Based on cumulative attempts for tenth grade students  
\*Minimum percentage of students who must pass the test for the district to meet the standard      (bold) Meeting the state standard

**Percentage of Students Who Passed Proficiency Tests in 2000-2001  
Comparison of African American and White Performance**

**9th<sup>1</sup> Grade**

	African American	White	Standard
Citizenship	58.3	65.8	75
Mathematics	36.1	49.3	75
Reading	<b>77.5</b>	<b>78.6</b>	75
Writing	<b>77.7</b>	<b>77.5</b>	75
Science	47.3	59.2	75

**9th<sup>2</sup> Grade**

	African American	White	Standard
Citizenship	71.8	80.7	85
Mathematics	45.7	64.4	85
Reading	83.2	<b>89.0</b>	85
Writing	<b>89.0</b>	<b>88.7</b>	85
Science	55.9	<b>75.1</b>	85

**Graduation Data**

**Graduation Rates  
Percent of Students Completing with Ninth Grade Cohort**

	<i>North</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>State</i>
	60.0	60.0	60.0	74.8

### Section 3: A Vision and Framework for Renewal

In a recent meeting of an area Tech Prep Consortium celebrating ten years of success in the growth of these educational opportunities, the Executive Director reviewed data on student success. He concluded his remarks with the observation that the data suggested three things:

1. Students were out-performing other students of similar age.
2. Students were engaged in learning in ways that interested them.
3. Students knew where they were going after high school.

Should we not want this for all students? The vision that I have sketched in this section is, I hope, thoughtful, provocative, and, most important, challenging. It will require great effort, leaps of faith, genius, and creativity to make it happen. But this work must be done if we are to positively impact the future of students in our high schools today and for tomorrow. There is no silver bullet, no cure to be taken, and no way to duck the hard questions that must be posed about current practice. I am a former high school principal. I understand the strengths of the institution. I also understand the shortcomings and recognize that not all students are finding success. This *is* an attempt to honor the great traditions of the American high school, while aligning the structure, rhythms, and routines to a new mission that is based upon success for *all* students. T.E.

Lawrence wrote these words in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*:

All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their mind wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible.

Let's open our eyes and dream of futures for students that we all, at very deep levels, know we have yet to accomplish.

### **The Need**

A review of the data indicates to me the following:

1. The graduation rate is unacceptably low. Four out of every ten students who begin ninth grade do not make it to graduation. Most of these students will be consigned to lives of financial hardship and will begin to occupy their place in a permanent underclass that will require taxpayer expenditures to support them. Deeper disaggregation of graduation rate data indicates gender differences, with only one half of males making it to graduation with their cohort.
2. Of the students who do make it to graduation, three out of every six will not seek higher education beyond the high school diploma, or will begin postsecondary education, but quickly drop out.

3. There are differences in achievement between and among ethnic groups, and between genders. Without closing the gaps, we cannot believe that we are offering a useful education to all of our students.
4. Too few students are in programs that result in postsecondary experiences. Too few students are enrolling in vocational programs that will prepare them for participation in the economy of the future. Too few Tech Prep programs are available to students.
5. The college preparatory program should be strengthened so that our most able students have appropriate levels of challenge and preparation.
6. Too many students are being suspended and expelled from our high schools.

Finally, I raise the ticklish, many times unspoken, issues related to the perception in our community that there are differences between the quality of education available between North High School and South High School. Perceptions are rarely couched in reality, but perception is almost everything when communities judge their schools. To continue a situation that is divisive for this community requires more of an ostrich mentality than I can muster. To take on the challenge of examining this issue and developing creative solutions is fraught with risk. But Herodotus maintained, Great deeds are usually wrought at great risks. We are possibly at a time in the history of this district that is time for great deeds, whatever the risks.

### **The Framework**

*Educators need attend not only to the technical core of instruction but also to the nature of the human environments in which this instruction occurs. The social processes of school shape the meaning of school events for students and teachers alike. They can help to make schools engaging environments for students and productive workplaces for adults, or they can impede these ends.*

--Lee & Bryk (1989, p.190)

*The information we collected on the emotional side of engagement presents a disturbing picture. More than one third of the students we surveyed showed signs of being emotionally disengaged from school, as indexed by measures of mind-wandering, lack of interest, or inattentiveness. Half of the students we surveyed say their classes are boring. A third say they have lost interest in school, they are not learning very much, and that they get through the school day by fooling around with their classmates. And remember, ours was a sample of average students in average American schools — not a sample of high-risk school settings.*

-- Steinberg (1996, p.71)

We need high school for our students to be a place concerned with the technology of teaching and learning, but also — and as importantly-- a place that attends to the people involved in the process: the students, teachers, administrators, staff, and other adults, including parents, who make up the school community.

I am convinced that the successful high school for Springfield's future will include the following components, with attribution to *The Productive High School, Creating Personalized Academic Communities*. (Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, McGaughy, 2001)

- Our students will be engaged in a cohesive, nurturing culture.
- Our high school will design activities for inclusion, which invites high levels of involvement among all students, and activities that increase positive peer interactions.
- Our high school will provide schoolwork and learning opportunities that are relevant to present and future life. The work students do in high school will make sense to them and connect to life after high school. The students will add value back to the community. Students will see a clear connection between success in school and success in life.
- Our high school will attend to the students' need for a sense of belonging and membership. High school will be a place of personalization and where the usual rhythms and routines for both students and staff are challenged. The need for connection is seen to be very important for traditionally underserved students.
- Our high school will recognize the need for transitional programs for students. For freshman and other new students, we will design planned programs of induction that may include advisory programs, separating the entering class from the rest of the school as much as possible, placing students on teacher teams, interdisciplinary work, and high school and post-high school planning experiences.
- Our high school will recognize and celebrate diversity within the student body. Students in our high school will learn that individuals can be different and yet still get along and appreciate the uniqueness of others. (Gregor & Smith, 1987, p.26)
- Our high school will provide students a voice in their education. It is clear that student achievement is highly related to both commitment and participation in learning. Using student advisory groups, tutorial settings, honor councils, one-on-one meetings with students, and other student forums, our high school will move to enhance the traditional student council approach to determine how things are going at the school and what suggestions for change students might have. This input is sought both at the school and classroom levels.
- Our high school will give students more responsibility for their schooling. Our students will be more engaged as active participants in their learning. Teachers will be seen as co-designers of student work, with students being seen as the primary workers. Teachers will become the guide on the side, rather than always the sage on the stage.

- Our high school will be a place where students and teachers design flexible, customized programs based on student dispositions and needs. The school starts from the assumption that students are not standardized and teaching is not routine. (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 46-47)
- Our high school will support the whole student, physically and mentally. Each student arrives at the schoolhouse door with academic, personal, emotional, and social needs that must be addressed. Having a school where each student finds an adult or group of adults who listen and talk with them on all of the levels mentioned above provides greater attachment to the school and affects drop-out decisions. Through advisory programs, teacher teaming, and the dispositions of high school staff members, students are known and cared for academically and personally.
- Our high school will be a place where teachers do their work in a positive, professionally-oriented community. The school and district will support the professionalization of teachers and will provide the resources to increase the capacity of each teacher for success and growth. The high school will be a place where teachers report a culture that respects teaching and teachers feel a sense of dignity from being esteemed by colleagues, students, and community members. Teachers in our high school will work and plan together, engage in planned collegial activities, and feel a sense of common vision and mission. Teachers are involved in decision making and faculty councils and other faculty-level organizational features that will use accepted processes, such as the Baldrige processes, for inclusion in continuous improvement of teaching and learning in the school.
- Our high school will be a place in which the traditional rhythms and routines of high schools are replaced with researched-based components of high-performing high schools. The school will organize programs that facilitate relationships between and among students, teachers, administrators, and staff. Advisory groups meet regularly; mentoring and tutoring programs are designed into the school programs. Faculty are involved in extracurricular programs to develop common ground and build social ties with students. Multiple-year interactions give students a feeling that someone knows them and their particular story. Flexible programs connect students to the community and provide opportunities for engagement and giving back in substantive ways, increasing the sense of efficacy of students as members of the larger community. Plans are made for large schools to feel smaller.

#### Section 4: The Proposal

The proposal contained in this section comprises both current work at restructuring and future considerations of the status of and use of two high school campuses in our community. The

following are the major components of the recommendations proposed to guide future discussions about the future of high schooling for our community:

I. Our high school program will be organized around the notion that every student in our high school will be engaged in studies that result in post-high school experiences in further education or entry into the world of work. No longer will a general track program — what I refer to as a go nowhere program --be suffered by students. Entering freshman will select college preparatory, tech-preparatory, or a career-tech program, depending on their dispositions, needs, and desires. Seamless movement between and among these programs will be designed to accommodate changes based upon the changing needs and preparation of students who may wish a higher level of challenge or who adopt different career goals. Each student will have an individual and dynamic plan to guide his or her work that will have been started in the eighth grade year as an important component of preparation for success in high school.

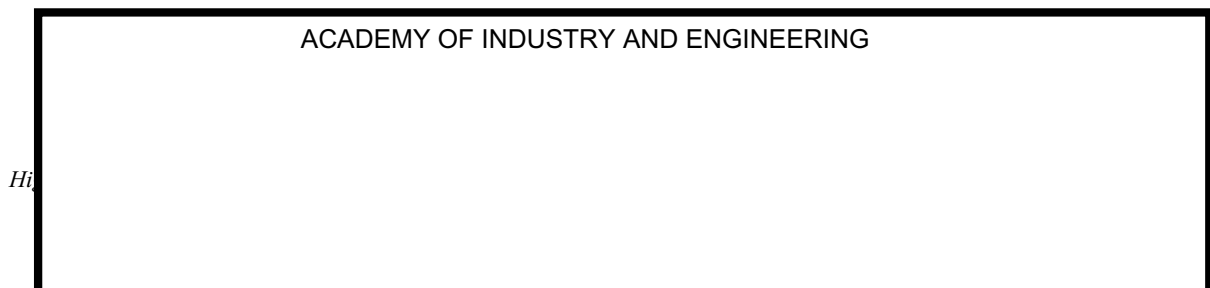
I emphasize here that the intent of these proposals is no way a diminution of the importance of high-quality college preparatory programs. Indeed, the intent is precisely the opposite. One criticism already heard is that by strengthening career prep and tech prep programs I intend to turn the high schools into vocational schools and ignore college prep. What I intend is that *all* programs increase in rigor and relevance, and that College Prep, Advanced Placement, and the International Baccalaureate program for an increasing percentage of our students.

II. The curriculum will be organized into Career Pathways, with the following career pathways providing the organizational features of the program:

- Arts and Communication
- Business and Management
- Environmental and Agricultural
- Health Services
- Human Resources/ Services
- Industrial and Engineering Systems

Each pathway accommodates a variety of related careers and levels of education required for success in each related career field.

A graphic portrayal might serve to indicate the levels of rigor and opportunity within an example pathway:



<i>Academic Program</i>	<i>Post-secondary Goal</i>
<b>International Baccalaureate</b>	Four year college / advanced degrees; Ex: CEO, global engineering firm
<b>Advanced Placement</b>	Four year college / advanced degrees; Ex: Architect
<b>College Prep</b>	Four year college / advanced degrees; Ex: Industrial Engineer
<b>Tech Prep</b>	Two year college / Four year college/advanced degrees; Ex: Contractor
<b>Career Prep</b>	Employment / Technical Training; Ex: Industrial Draftsperson

**III. Grade level organization will be seen as a 9/10, 11/12 structure.** Ninth and Tenth Grade Academies will be structured so that the transition from middle school is accounted for, students receive instruction in knowledge and skills needed to be successful on the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation Test, and student interests are identified and career pathways are chosen. Student needs for guidance and mentoring are satisfied with an advisor/advisee program that makes the larger high school seem more personal and responsive. Each student will begin the Ninth Grade with a Personal Learning Plan that describes learning goals, potential career interests, and schedules that result in graduation with each student s cohort. A pyramid of interventions will be designed and engaged for those students identified as in difficulty early in their high school career.

Tenth Grade is a continuation of the efforts of personalization in the Ninth Grade, with special attention given to the pyramid of interventions needed to be certain every student is ready for success on the spring administration of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade Ohio Graduation Test. Students who are not ready to move into the opportunities of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades have appropriately designed

experiences to quickly remediate their deficiencies so that they can rejoin their cohort at the earliest possible time.

Many students in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades will already be enrolled in foundation courses for Career Prep and Tech Prep programming that they will engage in their junior and senior year. Those students aiming toward four-year college experiences will be in rigorous courses. All students will have selected a career cluster for their pathway through programs that result in further education or the world of work after high school. No student will be in a general track program. Students will be able to identify their goals and know how they are doing in relation to those goals.

The junior year sees an increase in the rigor of courses and more specific preparation for future choices that the student might make. All students are in a College Preparatory Program, a Tech Prep Program, or a Career Prep Program. Students, with the help of counselors, advisors, and mentors are preparing for careers or postsecondary experiences, taking appropriate entrance tests, preparing applications, and beginning to design their senior year.

College preparatory students will have access to the International Baccalaureate program beginning in their junior year. The International Baccalaureate is a recognized curriculum of high academic rigor and service learning that includes participation in an international testing program resulting in preferential admission to the world's finest universities.

The senior year is completely redesigned. Programs are planned to engage students in preparation for what comes after high school and engages the student in project-based, community-based learning experiences that add value back to the community and prepares students for the next important transition in their lives. No longer will the second semester be a time to endure until the celebration of graduation finally comes. Senior seminars, time in jobs or experiences connected to career plans and seen as part of a planned program, and cap-stone projects provide a final exposition of the knowledge and skills obtained over twelve years of schooling. The senior year will become a vibrant, engaging, and exciting final year for all students in the public system and will be characterized by a high level of customization for each student in the use of time, the sites for learning experiences, and the depth of preparation for each student's next steps.

**IV. The following will require extensive discussion and design, which will include:**

- The further development of the Career Pathways Program
- The re-thinking and redesign of Springfield City Schools' relationship with the Springfield-Clark County Joint Vocational School along with the expansion of Career Prep programs

- Development of the International Baccalaureate Program
- Expansion of Tech-Prep offerings
- Use of Time and Scheduling
- Transitions Planning
- Development of Mentoring, Tutoring, and Advisory Programs
- Development of Community and University Partnerships for Programs and Training
- Articulation of Middle School programming to ensure that students are prepared for higher levels of success at high school.
- Expanded designs for alternative learning and individual learning plans.
- Development of Staff Development, Teacher Training, and Leadership Training to support the magnitude of necessary change.
- A pyramid of interventions available to students having difficulty will be described.
- The exploration and development of programming in partnership with Clark County Schools to leverage opportunities for area and regional participation of students in focused and specific magnet-type enrichment opportunities.

V. The final proposal: expand our vision of possibility by seeing the high school program as less dependent on place and more dependent on quality educational programming. Certainly, everything discussed above can be accomplished with separate program development in each of the existing high schools. For reasons I will explain below, I believe that Springfield should return to one high school: Springfield High School, comprised of four campuses: South and North, with Springfield-Clark County JVS seen as a third campus for purposes of programming in the Career Tech area. The fourth campus is the community at large, in which students engage in linkages that connect them into applied learning experiences and add value back to the community.

Both high school campuses would offer the core academic and student support programs in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The programs at each of the campuses would mirror the other and would comprise the Lower Academy. The student populations served would come from traditional attendance areas with provision made for open enrollment transfer on a space-available basis.

Students would not be permitted to move into the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade programs until they have passed the Ohio Graduation Test, and demonstrated the necessary proficiency for success in the Upper Academy.

At the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade levels, the Upper Academy would provide the specialized programming related to career goals after high school described in the Career Pathways organization of the curriculum. Availability of these programs would be split between the two high

school campuses with open enrollment into each of the Pathways. For example, each high school would offer three of the six academies, both to best utilize existing staff, reduce replication, and facilitate the movement of students across the city.

Bands, orchestras, and choirs, theatrical performances, clubs and other extracurriculars may benefit by increased quality and efficiency through combination of two existing student bodies, acknowledging the challenge of schedule and place. Although consolidation of athletic programs may reduce opportunity on the face of it, special consideration of transitional planning and expansion of may result in an even richer sports program. In any case, student opportunity to interact with, rather than compete with, other students across the city in athletic, artistic, and academic performance would predictably reduce the persistent north-south division.

Springfield City Schools would return to the concept of one high school, with the reminder that Springfield has been split into two high schools for only about two generations. In fact, this writer, at 55 years old, entered South High School in 1963, a mere three years after Springfield High School had been split. Many remember the stature that Springfield High School enjoyed throughout the state, both in quality of educational programming and in the quality of the athletic programs. Additionally, many remember the days when all students in Springfield, despite the accident of address or socio-economic status, possessed the opportunity to sit side-by-side with anyone else in the community. Certainly, this was not a perfect world and I do not want to romanticize a world in which prejudice and socio-economic status produced somewhat immutable strata within the high school. However, the physical division of the schools has resulted in an unfortunate perception of inequity and unequal educational opportunity. This perception is aggravated by the inevitable competition between the two schools on the athletic field and court, and punctuates an all-too real We-Them, North-South split in our community. One high school, with essentially four campuses, organized so that students would pursue their academic plans where the programs exist, might go a long way to unifying the city, bring efficiencies in the development of high-quality educational and extracurricular programs, and position Springfield City Schools to regain the reputation of preeminence in high schools of quality across this nation.

#### Other Organizational Patterns

Although my personal focus and preference lie in the foregoing, other patterns of organization might be explored and/or posited as options for consideration. One such pattern is consistent with the concept of one high school with two campuses, but calls for the lower school (9-10) to be at one campus, and the upper school at the other. JVS and the community round out the potential sites for education. Certainly this option satisfies the need for blending students from across the city, and brings some efficiency in operations (except possibly transportation) and

staffing. It presents some problems of perceptions for staffing for those teachers who would serve the lower school and those who would be assigned to the upper school (although this issue speaks to the artificial pecking order that delineates status in high school teaching that should be abandoned for status arising out of ability and results in teaching all students well). Additionally, placing all ninth grade and tenth grade students in one school disallows the modeling opportunities that upper classmen provide to younger students and may increase the likelihood of younger students falling through the cracks when large numbers of ninth and tenth grades students are all together in one setting.

Other permutations may naturally arise from exhaustive research and development, and I would not want to suppress great ideas through heavy-handed insistence on the proposed restructuring. The effort to take time to explore, to benchmark on the best high schools, and to nurture a collective consensus on possible futures that best fit Springfield must be undertaken in deliberate and deliberative fashion.

Certainly, a recommendation to stay the same as we are now could possibly be produced by the community and staff engagement envisioned by our planning processes. This result would have a stultifying effect on the attempt to transform our schools into the high performance, high engagement institutions that this community needs and deserves. Such a disappointing result would be tantamount to throwing in the towel on our future.

#### Next Steps

*You don't have to be old to be wise,  
The bird doesn't wait till he dies to fly.*  
*from Iwoya*  
*by Angelique Kidjo, Dave Matthews, J. Hebrail*

Obviously, the devil is in the details of such a dramatically different way of seeing high school in Springfield. Dialogue must be structured, questions formulated and answered, and broad consensus on this vision achieved. But time is of the essence, and we have gained funding for further planning through the KnowledgeWorks Foundation. We must engage our own learning community and the larger Springfield community in dialogues to determine possibilities. Certainly the skeleton of the plan above will probably be modified many times, but we must not shrink from the responsibility of stepping up to the difficult, sensitive issues I have raised here. What I do know is that other school districts around this nation have recognized the challenge and met it, with dramatic improvements in the quality of education for all students. Our window of opportunity is narrow if we are not to be passed by in the market place of education. Competition

demands continuous improvement. Our students deserve continuous improvement. I believe our community is looking for and will support the risks required for dramatic improvement.

*We rise or fall by the choice we make  
It all depends on the road we take  
And the choice and the road each depend  
On the light we have, the light we bend,  
On the light we use  
Or refuse.  
from Mental Flight  
Ben Okri, Nigeria*

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