Cost Effective Design Solutions for Schools, Businesses, and Communities

CREATIVE IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL

C.I.C.

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Our Goal

Our goal is to inspire schools and their neighborhood-partners to embrace community-sourced arts and design as vehicles for positive change. The Creative Improvement Council's (CIC) award-winning comprehensive approach transforms learning and teaching environments for the challenges of the future. We offer The *CIC Game Plan* as a practical guide for creating energized and interesting surroundings that enrich the experiences for everyone in the school community. Establishing a thoughtful, interesting, engaging, and welcoming environment will seamlessly add to the positive experiences for everyone. Creating an environment conducive to learning, working, and discovery will support the ethos of your institution.

We offer this information for teachers, parents, and community members motivated to make cost-effective design improvements that transform tired, unattractive school settings into vibrant places that encourage and sustain strong community bonds. While our experiences and expertise flourished in a school-setting, this work is applicable to public places, businesses, and municipalities. Developing opportunities to connect your stakeholders is an important part of CIC's methodology: not only is it important to recognize the needs of students, but it's also equally important to recognize the needs of educators, staff, administrators, and community members.

The Game Plan's first chapter will take you through building a team, setting priorities, raising funds, publicizing your achievements, and keeping your spirits up!

Subsequent chapters walk you through the design process. The "nuts and bolts" of transforming neglected interiors and exteriors into vibrant spaces will encourage learning, friendship, and belonging for everyone. The Projects we share range from small ideas like creating more attractive and functional "lost and found boxes" to installing large-scale architectural facades that unify disjointed buildings.

No matter the scale of your school makeover, art and design can always work together to unlock your school's potential! The physical environment is an opportunity to create culture and commitments: it influences behavior and can facilitate change. You have the power to transform that environment and energize and inspire your stakeholders. We believe the results we've achieved—connections and positivity—are all attainable with resources and energy available in most schools and communities.

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CHAPTER

1

PLANS, PEOPLE, PRIORITIES

Why Have a Game Plan?

A *Game Plan* gives schools the opportunity to guide ideas and behaviors that support positive change. It's vital to have a *Game Plan* for your school's makeover projects. **Research and data heavily support connections between learning environments, student success and faculty retention**. Schools and institutions that have not made improvements or changes can use CIC's experience and knowledge to realize their own goals. Transforming everyone's learning spaces yields positive results in energizing and inspiring students, staff, and the greater school community. One main CIC goal is to learn to work together. Our approach is successful in developing a motivated staff, increasing productivity, and building strong connections with everyone involved with the facility.

USE THE CIC APPROACH AS YOUR COMPASS TO HELP YOU GET THERE!

Artist-in-Residence: *Individuals Collective.*

"It's scary to do something different, but we must be brave. We must dream of what the space can be and how it can improve learning. A space redesign project is an opportunity to bring out the most creative ideas in educators, students, and community members. Each project has unique challenges depending on the vision, goals, history, personalities, politics, and finances of the environment. The work we do today prepares us for rapid improvement tomorrow."

–Dwight Carter, Gary Sebach, and Mark White

What's In Your Space? Thousand Oaks, CA.: Corwin Publishing, 2016

Building Your Team

In the beginning of your journey, establish your "Team." It's important for the team to be brave, confident, and trusting. In order for the team members to be creative and practice "design thinking," they need to feel safe in exploring creative risk taking. The team must be supportive and receptive to everyone's ideas. The early planning meetings must be "judgment free" zones. Brainstorming design sessions are key to exploration. Risk taking is vital to developing your successful Game Plan.

Design Team Meeting;
Staff, Students, and Community Members.

Our experience recommends organizing a manageable group of positive people to develop your Game Plan. Teachers, students, staff (maintenance, secretaries, administrators) and community members are all viable candidates to be part of the team. Look for volunteers who are team players and share a positive attitude about education, students, and the value of community engagement to motivate people to care for the environment - the school, its grounds and sense of place. Reliability, follow-through, and good communication skills are essential personality characteristics of team members.

Custodians and maintenance personnel are valuable resources for every school. We have worked on projects where custodial staff were an insightful part of the team. They bring a practical understanding of the implications of selected project materials and their long-term maintenance needs. They will be taking care of what gets designed and built so having a representative from the custodial staff involved will enhance both the design process and its maintenance for years to come.

It's important to have one or two key people leading the charge. Consider carefully who the school community respects and admires. Give them the responsibility to invite and include specific staff, students, and community members to participate in the process. Consider the programs and clubs that your school offers to see where good volunteers can be found. Some examples are faculty, administrators, motivated students, student council members, facility personnel, art & design departments, building trades, strong community members, etc. If someone is too busy to participate, respect their concerns; it is important not to overload anyone on the team.

GAMES ARE VITAL

Games are vital to learning whether played on a field or with a console. Some metaphors from the world of games apply here:

1 Build a good team: Identify individual strengths, weaknesses, and roles and build the team accordingly.

2 Know your opponents and strategize to work around them.

3 The best defense is a good offense: the time spent gathering information about funds, rules and regulations, school policies and procedures will give a clear assessment of the environment in which you work.

4 Have some skin in the game: The players need to believe this matters to them as well as the greater good.

As much as we advocate an inclusive approach, important decisions are more difficult to achieve if there are too many "decision makers" in the planning process. "Too many cooks spoil the broth." Having too large a team becomes a greater challenge when ideas and directions are so varied that it's increasingly difficult to make decisions and move forward. We've had the most success working with teams consisting of five to nine people. Certainly, team sizes can vary based on what schools believe is best for them to be effective in their progress. Establish and identify a chain of command. The team needs to be a small group that has a common understanding of approach. The number on the governing body should be an odd number so that when all are present to vote on projects there will be a majority decision one way or another.

The team needs to be open-minded and in a position to receive suggestions and ideas. They must have the ability to control and guide changes. It's important to maintain continuity throughout the process. Creating a sense of place with meaning and belonging is a work in progress. It is also important to have the autonomy to say "no" to any ill-conceived projects that may surface in the future. Setting the ground rules for project review and final decisions will support your process. Hold discussions with staff, school administration, and the school board. Design a process for input and decision-making that anticipates problems, otherwise, it will be a real hodgepodge of design work with little continuity and positive impact. We encourage student

Community Volunteer at Work.

representation with these initial decisions. Additional exciting roles for the students to play are in the "hands-on experiential" transformation process.

Good team members can come from anywhere in your learning community. Look to the school's existing programs and assess the leadership within those disciplines. Identify specific people and programs that can move the agenda forward, some examples include Media & Arts, IT Departments., Buildings & Grounds, Industrial Arts, Visual Arts, Technical Center programs. These are all great resources to find capable people willing to be involved in the makeover process.

As you build your team and consider all aspects of your school makeover, be inclusive of community members with a range of physical abilities. It is advisable to convene a focus group from the whole school community to listen to students, faculty and staff who have mobility challenges to understand how best to integrate their accessibility needs into your school makeover.

A few key considerations include the following:

- Disabilities are not always visible. Sometimes they are outwardly physical- wheelchair use for example, but sometimes they are harder to discern such as developmental disabilities. Some ideas to consider include the following:

- Make spaces for wheelchair users to join discussions without difficulty. You can do this by planning for adequate space and remembering that wheelchair users enjoy conversation at eye-level, so having spaces for them to sit easily with others in a group supports courtesy and making them feel welcome.

- Signage should be high contrast and lettering should be easily readable.

- There are many online resources for education. A good place to start is: **www.ada.gov**

Leadership

It's important to take into account leadership, faculty, and staff. A critical component when creating your Game Plan depends upon what type of leadership is at the facility. We have worked with schools where the leaders are fully engaged, and we have worked with schools where administrators were very "hands-off" in their approach. It is critical to have an understanding of the organizational culture in terms of how to best move forward with CIC practices.

At one school, the lead administrator established several new committees (teams) within their school, e.g., curriculum, vision, safety, design improvements, etc. One of the committees was specific to addressing a school "makeover" project. The administrator asked the staff to sign up for three different committees. This approach gave the school leader an opportunity to "channel" the faculty to serve on committees that best matched their interests and abilities.

We also worked with schools where leadership was not directly engaged. The challenge was to identify and assemble a strong team that had the courage and ability to influence positive changes. It is extremely important to be inclusive. At the same time, a small chain of command needs to be established in order to make decisions and move the process forward in a timely manner.

A lack of leadership and understanding at any phase from design through implementation of new design elements will lead to poor results. Simply allowing everyone to do what they want, where and when they want, will lead to a lack of continuity and substandard design. Design elements need to complement and flow with each other. Letting anyone design on his/her/their whim, will neither build cohesiveness for the team nor lead to a successful comprehensive design makeover. This process requires sensitivity to the participants, balanced with strength to protect and build on everyone's great efforts to reach the best designs and goals for the school.

Student Leadership Collaboration-all part of the process.

Student Involvement

One of the goals of CIC work is to develop student ownership by empowering students in positive ways. Students directly involved in the school's transformation will develop strong bonds with, ties to, and stewardship of their school and community. Recognize that this process presents a great opportunity for students to actively participate in makeover projects. The additional skills learned will encourage positive behavior. These activities directly cultivate leadership qualities and provide experiences that develop strong community members for the future. As noted, once decisions and directions have been formulated, schools have had great success with students participating in the actual makeover work focusing on "experiential learning."

> "To watch the kids involved in the transformation process as well as the community is amazing! To see that level of energy and how it has changed the whole atmosphere of the school."
>
> **–School Board Member**

The CIC Game Plan at its core is an interdisciplinary approach which can be woven into school curriculum. Interdepartmental cooperation enhances the ability of students to work on projects that benefit the school. One example was a brick walkway created at an entrance to a high school. The Math Department was enlisted to determine proper amounts of material, e.g. sand, fill, and bricks that were needed for the project. Another class took on the responsibility of manually preparing the space along with support from the maintenance staff. A third class, an Art class, was given the charge of creating the design, cleaning and painting the bricks for the walkway. The bricks were donated from a regional salvage company. The sand was donated by a local masonry business. Some of the landscaping was provided by the school's "Buildings and Grounds Department," and a local community volunteer oversaw the installation.

Community Partners

Every community has artisans, craftsmen, people working in the trades and the general public who welcome the opportunity to be involved. Quite often these people are willing to donate their time and efforts to help bring a school project to fruition. Identify community resources that may be available for donations and support. Businesses are often willing to defray their costs knowing they are supporting their local schools. Most businesses are supportive in helping schools with estimating costs of their materials and products. It's important not to exceed the generosity of people who are willing to help. **Thank donors for their generosity and energy that they gave to the project! This is another opportunity to advertise your school makeover projects, in addition to highlighting businesses and their willingness to support your school and the community. It is a "win-win" for everyone when you publicly thank your donors for supporting projects.

A Few Words of Caution

"Energy vampires" exist everywhere. There are always critics who want to maintain the status quo, good or bad. Comments that you're likely to hear include the following, "this will never work; we've

Highly Visible Signage on School Vehicle.

tried this before; it won't last more than two weeks; we don't have the money; and it was good enough for me when I went to school here, it should be good enough now." Inevitably there will be negative criticism. Stay away from people that are inflexible or overly assertive. Asking anyone and everyone to get involved might be more trouble than it's worth. There will always be cynicism and rejection; creative minds must lead the way.

Be prepared for some backlash. Change can be difficult. Human nature is naturally fearful of the unknown and what may be different. There are people in every community where change of any sort causes distress and fear. To those uncomfortable with this it can be scary. Keep in mind, fear is at the root of many problems. Some fear judgment by peers or a fear of embarrassment. Some fear art. The team members need to be secure in their convictions about the value of art and design to make stronger and safer learning environments. Remember, trust is needed to be creative.

These improvement initiatives should not be forced upon anyone. It's vital to consider the time and effort team members will spend developing the Game Plan. Team members will primarily be volunteers as part of the transformation process. It is important not to overload volunteers with additional daily responsibilities. Sharing this extra workload develops trust and teamwork to realize the goals of making the improvements.

Planning the Project

Now that your Team is established, it's time to develop your long-range Game Plan. We recommend the following steps and stages:

1 STEP ONE: CONVERSATIONS

Prior to your first team meetings, gather your school's current mission and vision statements. Encourage your team to review the documents. As the team embarks on the school's transformation process, have discussions about what supports the school's ethos, mission, and goals. Here are some questions the Team might take up as conversation starters:

- Are the mission and vision of the school still current?
- How can the makeover sow the seeds of optimism, positive energy and joy that will bloom and grow on your campus for years to come?
- What are your core values?
- How do you see the transformation of the spaces affecting the learning process?
- How does space encourage students to congregate, leading to more positive interactions, while also creating safe spaces for those who are more comfortable independently?
- How do you support all types of learners?
- How do you distinguish your school from other schools?
- How is your school evolving to respond to the 21st century and beyond?
- What is the image you want to represent?
- What is the message you want to convey?
- How do you support the ethos of your school?

2 STEP TWO: THE WALK-ABOUT

Once the Team has been able to establish a consensus on the school's ethos going forward, take a "walk-about" all around your school and campus to see whether, how, and where the physical environment expresses that ethos. This is the most honest way of identifying places that need redesign and makeover help. View spaces with a fresh open mind. Studying

Here are some features to consider on your Team Walk-about:

LIGHT, FURNITURE, COLOR, ENTRANCES, HALLWAYS, WALLS, STAIRWAYS, COLLABORATIVE SPACES, ARTWORK, DISPLAY CASES, SIGNAGE, TRAFFIC FLOW, ADAPTABILITY, TECHNOLOGY OFFERINGS.

traffic flow and human behavior during the course of the day is critical for design decisions. Creating an interesting environment will enhance the energy and experience for everyone. Everything needs to flow. Despite limited finances, don't be afraid to dream BIG. When you begin this "design thinking" process, don't let funding drive your dreams. "Unlock your Block." Think outside the generic classroom/school white cinder block scenario. Don't begin brainstorming, planning, and designing by limiting your ideas knowing there may not be funding available. It is important to approach the process with an open mind and view the school and campus as a clean slate. Yes, you may need to compromise with realities later, but dreaming big allows your guiding ideals and values to emerge.

Being creative and idealistic in your Team's approach to the transformation of space can be fun, interesting, and inspirational. Be courageous. Be open to exploring ideas from new venues. Do some research. Visit college and university campuses, student centers, museum additions, new office buildings, favorite buildings, municipal buildings, public spaces, etc. Interview a local architect or interior designer. This research will help you identify design improvements that may be inspirational for your makeover projects.

3 **STEP THREE: THE CHARETTE**

Bring your team together for the first of several brainstorming sessions, referred to in the design field as a "charette." (Charrettes were the wagons that collected the work of aspiring French artists at the École des Beaux-Arts for review at the end of the term.) It has come to mean a lively interactive discussion for many areas of life that require creative planning and design today.

The CIC approach is built around art and design. Having a visual identity in the form of a logo or branding strategy makes your projects identifiable. This is important for building and maintaining momentum for the project. Creating these elements is critical to establishing your design approach, your foundation and beyond. Your brand is more than a logo. It supports your school's ethos by weaving it into design elements throughout the facility. It's important to integrate branding, color palette, and logo into visual work throughout the school campus, media and promotional materials.

See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion on branding and design.

Students presenting their design ideas for a CIC project.

Your first few meetings are exploratory and brainstorming. This is an opportunity for all team members to be participatory, creative and free to think big and outside the box. Encourage everyone not to hold back ideas, build upon each other and push the creative thinking process. DREAM…. don't let funding be a driving force in the charette because this may limit imaginative ideas and surprising outcomes.

We suggest using "Post-It-Notes" for the Charrette process. Writing ideas down individually on post-it-notes is a great way to brainstorm and compile improvement ideas. We have used large surface areas, smart boards, tables, walls to randomly place the post-it-note ideas. Once several exciting project ideas have emerged, organize ideas by groups into three phases: High impact projects; Secondary, on-going projects to be completed over 2-3 years; and on-the-horizon projects. It's important to identify and separate projects into these phases to distribute your finite budgets, location, people power and timing. This approach will give you a broad spectrum of the redesign projects that your team would like to address. Through inspirational ideas generated from your charette, your Game Plan will begin to materialize.

Establish Your Priorities with a Three-Phase System

After your initial conversations, walk-abouts, and charrettes, you will have a strong sense of many projects you want to undertake. Keep in mind some makeover projects may transpire over several years, and that design improvements take a tremendous amount of time and energy. It's important to take small steps to develop your overall Game Plan for the future. Mobilizing staff and volunteers to do the work will become easier once your initial transformation process begins. Those involved will be energized to participate in future projects as they experience the positive effects of the work completed.

After several meetings, your team will have articulated your school's ethos; established the branding, logo, and color palettes that can best express that ethos and culture; and located some project-spaces that need transformation. Group your projects into these three phases.

Exterior Logo and Branding

1 **"HIGH IMPACT" PHASE**

- Branding/Rebranding, Color Palette, Logo, and Font. (These core design elements are part of your design compass. See Chapter 2 for a full discussion of how to create this compass of design.)
- Establish exterior and interior signage.
- Identify high traffic area projects that will give you the best return for your efforts -"the biggest bang for your buck."

When people enter your building what first impressions do they have? It's important to realize that main entrances are prime real estate that highlight your school's mission, vision, and branding. These areas set the climate and expectations while supporting the school's ethos. Entrances and lobbies are high priority spaces that warrant strong and thoughtful interior design attention.

Above: School Lobby demo work and new lobby.

Redesigning and rethinking areas of your school signals a positive message to stakeholders. Transforming spaces where people interact provides opportunities to build community and grow positive relationships.

It is vital to develop and maintain a consistency of design throughout your campus. Remember that less is more. You don't want to be overzealous in your approach. We emphasize a comprehensive approach in highlighting and accenting through color and space without being overbearing, intrusive, or unattractive. Your goal is to be comforting, inviting, and thought provoking. Be open minded to develop an expanded color palette. Don't limit your color palette only to your traditional school colors. While we recognize the connection the school colors bring to your facility and community, it is important to expand one's palette in the make-over project. There are endless opportunities to use your branding and accent colors throughout your campus.

Remember that every school district has a different chain of command. It's necessary to confirm your makeover projects comply with municipal, state or Federal regulations. Discussing logistics, schedules, fire codes, zoning ordinances and proper procedures must all be taken into account.

See the Projects Chapter for detailed descriptions of other high-impact transformations!

2 **SECONDARY, ON-GOING PHASE**

- 2 - 3 year projects.
- Build upon your initial improvements.
- Develop further signage, branding.
- Auxiliary accents, additional branding throughout the facility.
- Interdisciplinary curriculum, projects.
- Projects that may currently not have the funding, time, or manpower to complete.

The CIC approach has helped schools build upon the success of their completed "High Impact" projects by identifying additional areas needing improvement throughout their facility. These are projects that may transpire over a two to three-year period of time and possibly even longer. These projects were not as pressing but were vital to the overall makeover campaign. Once a high impact phase is completed, the success achieved will generate more enthusiasm. There will be more of a "buy-in" that will enable the team to move forward with additional makeover projects.

An example of a secondary phase project occurred when CIC lead team members designed and revitalized prominent exterior entrances at their school. The uninviting, depressing surroundings were calling out for help. This makeover project consisted of colorful brick walkways, flower, and fruit gardens, fencing, and stones with inspirational wording (journey, hope, courage). Their landscape design theme incorporated the community's agricultural and industrial cultural heritage. Repurposed, salvaged farm implements were melded with exciting modern materials into benches and sculpture. These mixed media works introduced interesting and functional art into the once drab campus.

Further Examples of Secondary Projects

- Trash bin covers
- Shelving units
- Entrances/lobbies, hallways
- Light fixtures
- Public art (outdoor sculptures, murals, wall reliefs, etc.)
- Benches
- Fencing
- Mosaic signage
- Additional painting/branding
- Ceramic tile installations
- Building an art display system

See Chapter 5 "Projects" for further descriptions and visuals for many of these Secondary Projects

3 FUTURE, ON-THE-HORIZON PHASE

- Identify ideas and areas that require additional focus, yet not a priority.
- Identify which makeover projects need long term maintenance: art installations, garden plantings etc. Remember neglect of one's facility radiates a message of carelessness to all who use the facility including the local community.
- It's beneficial for the team to discuss long term maintenance plans of makeover projects.
- Who is responsible for its upkeep and oversee maintenance?
- Who will manage improvements?
- How will this maintenance plan be funded?

Funding

The CIC approach is extremely cost-effective. Having said that, some financial backing is critical in moving forward and getting things accomplished. Even simple in-house work will require some funding. Paint, tile, materials, signage, all require a budget. It doesn't take a tremendous amount of money, materials, or paint to make dramatic changes, but it does require basic funding.

To be most cost-effective, explore how the majority of the makeover work and design improvements can be completed "in house." Much of the makeover work can be planned and implemented without incurring much cost. By being creative and supportive, there are many ways to weave CIC work into school curriculums, activities, or club functions. Authentic design and transformational work lends itself seamlessly to an interdisciplinary approach. A makeover project can be incorporated into several academic disciplines such as Math, Art, Technical Education and Special Needs Education, further enhancing the depth and scope of the

Students planting donated flowers along newly installed split rail fence.

Students, Staff, and Volunteers at work. All hands-on deck!

project. Students from several areas of studies have an opportunity to work in unison for the overall school and community. This pedagogical approach cultivates student ownership in their school and learning pathways.

When you do need to find funding for expenses beyond what you can cover in-house, however, it is important to have your "Game Plan" prior to soliciting funds and approaching donors. It's helpful to have a fundraising "script" ... and make sure you rehearse it. Don't overlook the opportunity to solicit financial assistance from your School Board. By developing and presenting your team's Game Plan in a professional manner, you will make a strong case for support. Student representation when presenting to the local school board to request financial support is a great way to involve students and develop their public speaking skills. They will gain confidence while connecting with their community. Most school boards clearly recognize the importance and value of the positive changes your team is proposing. Whether or not they have the resources to support your project is another story, but one worth pursuing.

Once you've created a script about the costs and value of your project and practiced delivering it, it will be easier to approach other sources of funding such as local and national foundations, grants, individual donors, community organizations, alumni organizations, etc.

Fundraising and methods and modes of communication are constantly changing. Social media, websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat are all current tools for this day and age. The digital landscape provides many platforms and opportunities to support diverse fundraising campaigns. Chances are there are other venues that will be created in the not-too-distant future - *maybe even before we complete this manual!*

By staying current and connected about and through social media it will show your school and community you care. Your school will be moving in the right direction and charting an exciting and dynamic course.

It is most important to be consistent in your fundraising campaign. Your strategy is an ongoing process. In order to develop strong donor relationships, you need to be a trusted source of relevant practical information. This approach resonates well with students, parents, and the community at large. Explanations, updates, reminders, and follow-ups demonstrate that you are connected.

Publicity

*It's important to tell **your** story!*

Share the achievements and successes of your school makeover projects. Celebrate with your school and your community. Promote your accomplishments through traditional and social media. Keep up with the latest forms of technology to get your message out effectively. Establish a social media platform to inform the public, generate enthusiasm, and to solicit support for future projects. Communication is important to influence and inform your stakeholders.

It's important to follow the school district's policies and protocols of publicity. Social media can be a "Catch-22" depending on your school and community. There will be positive and negative comments so you will need to develop a way to handle the negative comments. Again, your school's protocol will guide you. Sharing the positive changes that take place will further encourage interest, excitement, and positive feedback. Take advantage of your opportunities and learn what you have for publicity options. For example, your school's web site, newsletters, alumni associations, local newspapers, municipal list-serves, and television stations are all potential media partners.

Celebrate Your Successes!!

Host a "Launch" party or an open house. Acknowledging your achievements is another great way to reach out to your school and school community. Your launch should include lots of student participation which lends this to interdisciplinary experiences. We worked with a school where its Culinary Arts students provided refreshments, music students provided music, additional students designed and distributed programs to visitors attending the celebration. *Don't forget to invite your generous community donors and organizations to your launch!*

Your launch will bring multi-generations together to celebrate. Ask your team leaders to serve as hosts so everyone feels welcomed to the event. Celebrations demonstrate CIC's philosophy of connecting community members with young people to impact their future in a positive way.

Checklist

☐ Keep and create agendas.

☐ Keep minutes of meetings including dates.

☐ Take photographs and videos: before, during & after.

☐ Keep records of "in-kind" volunteer hours for verification & help when writing matching grants.

☐ Keep a record of donations of services and materials for in-kind matching grants.

☐ List community members with specific skill sets that are willing and able to help when needed.

☐ Establish long range plans.

☐ Will committee members be paid a stipend for their extra services?

☐ Consider establishing a school curator position.

☐ Identify potential funding sources such as student groups, the school board, businesses and foundations.

CHAPTER

2

Establishing Your "Compass of Design"

Finding Your Way

Does your school have a mascot or logo? Is there a school motto? If yes, you already have a brand. If not, developing them can be an important first step in working together to form a visual identity and a statement of your school's ethos or core values. If you have some or all of these elements, are they still relevant? Is your school involved in a merger or consolidation? Creating a logo or mascot can be the first step in unifying the students, faculty, staff, and communities brought together through a political process that might have been painful or divisive.

If you are satisfied with your school's symbols, you might consider whether your CIC projects need a visual identity that is derived from them. Careful consideration of details like fonts for text, colors, and signs can bring profound results: greater unity among the members of your school community, a drive for success, and a pride of place. This "Compass of Design" will support marketing and funding for the projects your team selects.

> "A brand doesn't simply mean a logo. We take the thinking developed in the brand strategy and use it to inspire the creation of rich, flexible and responsive design systems. Everywhere and everyone that identity touches is an opportunity to create an experience, make an impact and build your brand."
>
> **–THERE, We Build Brands,**
> **"Identity, What We Do,"**
> THERE, (https://therestudio.com/)

Expanding the school logo in creative ways.

Branding/Rebranding

Branding and rebranding is an exciting process. There is an opportunity for your team to redesign and re-energize your overall mission. The branding and rebranding process provides schools with innovative and inspirational opportunities that promote your identity. Reworking your existing brand and logo brings a fresh outlook to an outdated and uninspiring design. Branding and rebranding are your "Compass of Design" and the foundation that impacts the three phases of your makeover projects. (High Impact, Secondary and Future.)

Branding describes the overall design and promotion of your institution and your values to your stakeholders. Branding supports your school's ethos through its logo, color palette, fonts, and marketing strategies. The challenge is to consistently display these visual elements of your brand that are easily recognizable. These design elements are vital to communicate your school's mission, values, and ideals. Your brand needs to reflect these core values to your targeted audience.

Rebranding is when an existing brand design elements are modified or altered to create current messaging and connections. Successful rebranding builds upon your existing brand. Updating your "brand equity," the logo and font, and the color

palette will create a contemporary and meaningful image. Your "brand equity" consists of the major visual elements within your brand that historically have resonated with your community. Your branding "makeover" will re-energize and engage your students, staff and school community.

Branding helps set your institution apart from others. When done effectively and consistently, the public should immediately recognize your brand based on its design elements, e.g., logo, color, and font. Many examples of this approach can be seen with corporate products and services (Nike, Apple, McDonald's). The image of their logos clearly identifies their particular brand to consumers. Colleges and universities also spend great effort and focus to develop their brands, so they are instantly recognizable (University of Texas: Texas Longhorns; University of California, Santa Cruz: Banana Slugs; University of Alabama: Crimson Tide).

Spending time developing your new brand provides a solid platform that supports your school's mission. Again, it is important to be brave! Change can be difficult. It is human nature to be fearful of the unknown. It takes courage and risks to develop innovative design ideas. Your team is a group of bright people collaborating to develop something great. We recognize that schools and institutions may have had the same logo for years. We are not suggesting you abandon your brand equity. Nevertheless, it is important to re-assess the existing design. Creating a new brand is part of establishing a solid design foundation to build upon for the new, the next, and the better, one step at a time.

Successful branding is instrumental in transforming your school and inspiring your stakeholders. It's important to be consistent with your branding. You will influence positive behavior and facilitate positive changes throughout your environment. The visual impacts should not be underestimated. Our brains process visual imagery faster than text and written information. To be effective, your branding should be used throughout numerous venues. These are design opportunities to support your mission while building your brand and having a positive impact on your community.

BRANDING AND REBRANDING ARE YOUR "COMPASS OF DESIGN"

After exploring these questions, the next step is to create a visual and verbal brand that best communicates your school's ethos and goals. The important elements of your branding are logo, color palette, fonts, and consistent visual displays. Integrate and weave branding into all visual work throughout the school campus. It's important to maintain a level of comfortable continuity. Developing consistency is key to supporting your identity. Through your branding you will continually develop strong connections with your stakeholders and the overall community.

Simple, yet effective logo.

GUIDING DESIGN QUESTIONS

Reviewing some core questions about your school and community will point you in the right direction.

- What is the image you want to represent?
- What message do you want to convey?
- How will your branding and logo reflect your mission statement?
- How is your school evolving to changes in the 21st century?
- Who are your stakeholders?
- What separates your school from other schools?

Logo/Mascot

Logo variation as a constant school theme.

Your brand is more than your logo. Yet, your logo is the "core" of your brand. Review your existing branding elements: logo, color palette, and font. If you're comfortable with your existing logo, you may choose to keep this as your foundation and build upon it. You don't need to abandon your current logo. Build on its history which has been established while positioning it to be relevant and successful in the 21st century...*don't stand still*. Expanding upon your logo will dramatically improve its impact and message in the present and for the future.

Many school districts define their name/identity from a specific geographic area, region or environment, e.g., beautiful natural surroundings, animals, birds, weather elements. We advocate being respectful and cognizant of one's history and support maintaining these elements. At the same time, we encourage you to use existing emblems positively and creatively in your design.

Suggestions for developing your logo:

- Review the "Elements and Principles of Design."
- Think outside the box, while maintaining continuity and a connection to your current logo.
- Introduce a less realistic interpretation.
- Integrate the use of negative space. (Use of negative space adds interest to the eye.)
- Movement: simple complementary lines.

Redesigning a Logo or Mascot

Schools replace and redesign their logos, mascots, and colors for a variety of reasons:
- Some schools choose a new identity.
- Some schools consolidate and merge.
- Some schools are mandated to change their logo by their state boards of education.

It is paramount that logos and mascots are not discriminatory, controversial, racially, or politically degrading to their stakeholders. Throughout our country, schools, corporations, and professional sports teams have rebranded their logos and mascots. Because schools strive to engage learners and inspire teachers, they must be receptive to positive changes that promote a climate of civility to welcome and support everyone. As America's 21st century education standards advance so must school logos and mascots adapt, transform, and evolve.

When beginning a large-scale rebranding campaign, it's important to allow input from stakeholders. The decision-making process can be challenging. Students, staff, alumni, and people in the community are exceptionally sensitive to rebranding changes. Dialogue and transparency are key elements for successful outcomes and transitions. Student and staff input are important. You want them onboard with these new initiatives. There are always going to be the "naysayers." Encouraging a "buy-in" from your stakeholders will make for an easier rebranding transition.

Different methodologies will work for different schools when selecting the new logo and mascot. Be open minded and sensitive to all the possibilities before a "top down" process is implemented. Not everyone is going to be onboard with the final outcome; however, it is important to create a visual image that engages all learners.

"Color My World!" Cups filled with paint for "Pour" painting project.

Replacing a logo or mascot is an opportunity to promote your school's mission and direction. This is a fortuitous time for the makeover team to brainstorm new venues that highlight your school's ethos.

Color

"Nearly every academic study on colors and branding will tell you that it's far more important for colors to support the personality you want to portray instead of trying to align with stereotypical color associations. Bottom line: There are no clear-cut guidelines for choosing your brand's colors. "It depends" is a frustrating answer, but it's the truth. However, the context you're working within is an essential consideration. It's the feeling, mood, and image that your brand or product creates that matters." Gregory Ciotti, "The Psychology of Color in Marketing and Branding," Huffington Post.

Color is one of the most critical design elements when developing a new identity. Colors are subjective, regional, and cultural. In addition to cultural differences, geographic impacts and social experiences may influence different responses to color. For example, the Southwest region of the US has a different color palette than the Northeast region. Once again, we suggest your team do its own research as well as reaching out to students, staff, and community members to help formalize a decision regarding the expanded palette. Keep in mind the final decision should be determined by the team members.

Color symbolism is personal. Everyone reacts to and interprets the color yellow differently. To some, yellow is energizing, happy, warm. To others yellow is unpleasant and possibly harsh. How the color yellow works in our environment is scientific. Its impact is technical. School buses are yellow because the color "jumps out" and grabs our attention. Think of McDonald's golden arches. Your challenge is to design with color that simply complements your institutional history, values, and vision.

School Lobby Before Transformation.
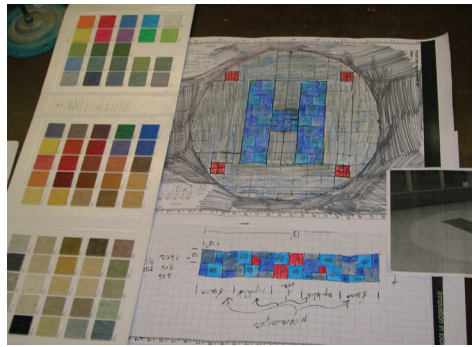
New Lobby Design Proposal.

New Lobby.

Navigating Your COLOR Landscape

Some schools have redesigned their color palette to reflect a new and exciting journey. Other schools feel strongly about maintaining their colors with its historical connection to the institution and community. We do not advocate one approach over the other. Yet, we do encourage your team to reassess, highlight, and reinforce your color palette in order to support your ethos and your future. A regional technical school's newly appointed administrator hired the CIC to facilitate a school and campus wide "branding makeover." The new principal was interested in expanding the color palette to improve the connections to their stakeholders of nine sending schools districts. Using CIC's approach, the makeover team reworked their existing brand and logo and brought a fresh outlook to their Technical Center.

Using three shades of blue provided the foundation for their new color palette. They then selected three additional colors (light green, orange and yellow) for highlighting and providing sparks of energy. These splashes of bright additional colors were used sparingly to enliven, invigorate, and engage. The team found ways to use the branding as accent colors throughout the building that supported the overall palette. They were able to develop and maintain a consistency of design which they continually built upon in interesting ways that enhanced their campus. It's important to remember that less is more. You don't want to be overzealous in your approach. The goal is to be comforting, inviting, and thought provoking.

The team was brave in taking a risk to select a new color palette beyond the colors used in the past. They were respectful of the school's history while building a school identity that resonated with their stakeholders. The new color palette was an instant success. It was as if people were waiting for something new and exciting to happen. Once the palette had been decided and work began, the energy exploded throughout the student body, staff and school communities. The positive responses were and still are palpable. The school was able to incorporate their new color palette to full advantage through their marketing campaign, social media, correspondence, and merchandise. They creatively used their new color palette in interesting ways to support their message of welcome to a broad range of new stakeholders.

Limited by zoning, the new signage and sculpture support the school's ethos.

Font

Fonts will pilot, plot, and direct the course of your branding identity to a higher level because fonts have strategic visual power. Your font (typeface) is the CPR lifeline that gives life to your visual identity and the GPS that gives direction to your logo and conveys your branding elements so that they stand out, are timeless and draw in an audience. Remember our brains process visual imagery faster than reading text. Fonts communicate messages faster than a viewer can process what they mean. A typeface has a lot to say. It may be interpreted as welcoming, happy, classy or it may be interpreted as unappealing and boring.

Using two fonts/typefaces is the norm. Select a primary and secondary. Avoid trendy appearances; the goal is that every font needs to transcend time and not become outdated quickly. Standard types of fonts that are available come in four different forms: Serif fonts, Sans serif fonts, Slab fonts, and Script fonts. Times New Roman is one of the oldest classical serif typefaces and historically works well because it is highly legible for printed documents, while digital platforms respond better to sans serif fonts.

PRIMARY:

The primary font accompanies your logo. Your primary font has the boldest of all personalities and characters. It is your visual lifeline of communication. This typeface sends a solid message of your branding and identity. Try to select a font that makes your logo stand out and represents the qualities that make your school unique.

SECONDARY: "Body Text/Copy Fonts"

The secondary font has to be easily readable, work well for fine print, and be displayed in low resolution for your web sites and internet offerings. Body text and copy should be so easily readable they are unnoticed. Readers will therefore focus on visual images and headers, not the body text. All print material generated by your school (letterhead

Taking the "Show on the Road!" A great public visual, school utility trailer with logo.

brochures, advertisements, publications, banners, etc.) should use your consistent secondary font. Your secondary font also needs to work well in italic and bold applications. Aesthetically, these options are necessary in communicating a strong and inviting message. Take time to access and research these different fonts when deciding which typeface works best to support your ethos and represent your school. There is a plethora of font resources for free and for purchase on the web.
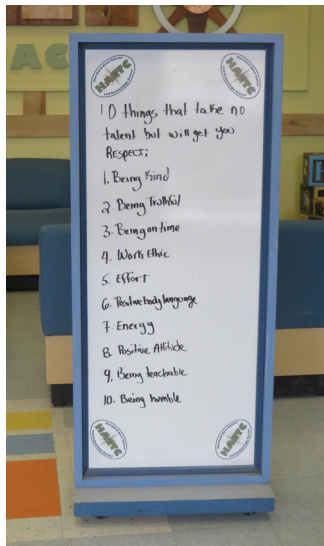

Exterior Signage.

Signage

Well-designed and thoughtful signage is a critical design element for your school branding and makeover. Signs need to be engaging to students, staff and the community while providing important decision making and directional information. Exterior and interior signage should not be left on the back burner. Signage should complement and support your design improvements, not clash, not compete and not be an afterthought.

Signage must include elements of your branding, logo, color palette and fonts. Signage, information management and directional mechanisms designs must be consistent throughout the campus. Developing an orderly signage system that is clear, concise, and logical is an opportunity to promote your brand in a thoughtful way. You will want this to be consistent in your promotional material as well. Avoid negative images and phrases. Your signage should be welcoming to all.

Front of message board sign.

Back of message board sign.

Marketing

A major marketing objective is to generate trust (safety), interest, engagement, and school spirit with your stakeholders. It's important to connect with your audience, elicit interest, attract new recruits, and reinforce your positive brand. A well-thought-out marketing campaign will attract an audience.

> "Signs continue to provide essential things such as building identity, messaging, directions, and wayfinding amid various changes. And by doing so, such signs, like themed graphics, help a school function while focusing on its primary mission: educating students."
>
> –Scott Berman, "Give Me A Sign," School Planning and Management, webspm.com/Articles/2016/02/01/Signs-Graphics.aspx.

Social media plays an important role with students and the larger community. It is insightful, fun, and inspirational to share your school's everyday stories through the voices of students. Technology today and in the future will allow you to communicate effectively with your stakeholders. Updates, reminders, stories, sharing student, alumni successes, staff achievements and profiles show that your school is in touch with its stakeholders. An online presence reinforces your ethos, encourages ownership and supports positive developments in your community.

Do your "Design Thinking" research. Brainstorm and generate a variety of ideas. Assess how other schools, colleges and universities promote their branding.

- How do they market their institution to potential students and recruiting staff?
- How do you want your school to be perceived?
- What sets you apart and makes you stand out from other schools?
- What might give you an edge in marketing and overall brand objectives?

Make sure that your brand elements are consistent across all marketing channels. Well-designed branding that is fully integrated into aspects of your promotional materials will help make your school instantly recognizable and attractive for viewers. Make sure your promotional platforms consistently reflect your school's brand. Images, logos, colors, and narratives genuinely represent what makes your school exciting and unique.

Branding "Leadership" and design teamwork communication are vital. It's necessary to have the people in charge of PR (public relations) to be consistent when visually communicating your brand and promotional materials. Marketing unification must be consistent with all promotional materials. Whether with band and athletic uniforms, school swag, banners, competitions, performances, bake sales, posts on social media and on the web, it is important to promote your brand identity consistently.

Funding

You can spend a lot of money working with a design firm to develop your brand. Our hope is that by providing you with a compass for direction along with helpful resources, your team will be successful establishing your personal brand. Keep in mind that every school has valuable resources that may be accessed, e.g., Art Departments, Media Arts and Technical Center programs. The internet is filled with current branding and rebranding resources; many are free. It is important to invest some time in researching what professionals have done in the past for inspiration.

Be proactive. Highlight interesting developments that are taking place in your school. Connecting with your audience, sparking new interest, and reinforcing your positive message will all help with your fundraising efforts. Show a human face to your brand. Document your makeover projects with photographs (before, during and after) and with videos. Share the success and impressive improvements with the public to drive more enthusiasm and support for future projects and financial support.

Every community has small businesses, craftspeople, artisans, and caring citizens. You may discover that by sharing your well-conceived ideas regarding your makeover projects, your approach will resonate with many community businesses. Through a generous and honest approach, the CIC found that some businesses donated products or provided them at cost. Donations for projects included exterior lighting for outdoor murals, sand and bricks for walkways and wood for benches. Chain stores have also been helpful providing goods and services at cost in order to support school improvement projects that benefit the overall good of their greater community.

YOUR "COMPASS OF DESIGN" WILL STEER YOU IN A POSITIVE AND SUCCESSFUL DIRECTION!

Volunteers are valuable and precious resources. The same approach in assembling your "team" should be used when identifying community volunteers. It is great to have their support, but you need to be vigilant in your ideas and approach and not be sidetracked by alternative viewpoints from outside sources, should they differ from the team.

In-kind donations (goods and services provided without compensation) are also very important resources. It is important not to burden those willing to share their "sweat equity", their efforts will be instrumental to your success. In-kind contributions may be applied towards "matching grant" applications. Keep a record of these donated goods and labor. Having a record of contributions is helpful to the local school boards and business to demonstrate the support from the community.

Be sure to highlight and celebrate everyone's contributions to the "makeover" and transformational process. Don't forget to thank and invite donors to your launch and unveiling ceremonies. Share your story through text and photos with great enthusiasm. Not only will you be celebrating your accomplishments, but you will be positioning yourself to have further successes with future fundraising campaigns...Good Luck!

In conclusion, every communication through your brand is a way for your school to inform and channel the public perception. Your school's brand can be promoted through its website, building signage, promotional materials, school merchandise, etc. Your brand is the direct reflection of your school. It is critical to connecting present, past and future students and helps build positive relationships.

CHAPTER

3

ENVISIONING INTERIOR DESIGN
FOR INFRASTRUCTURES OF LEARNING

Use the Arts and Design as Vehicles for Positive Change!

The CIC approach fosters a climate of civility that promotes learning, positive growth and collaboration for students, staff, and the greater school community. Working with what you already have, you can generate new types of learning spaces.

> Each learning space should be allowed the opportunity to be something greater than its box.
>
> **–Wyck Knox, Lead Architect, Discovery Design Team**

No lobby benches. A dire environment. Students sitting on the floor.

Informal Learning Spaces

"Informal Learning" is the highly valuable and spontaneous process of learning that is an unplanned and unscripted exchange of ideas, experiences, and knowledge between students, staff, and the community. Informal learning occurs in lobbies, hallways, cafeterias, offices, conference rooms, and beyond. Some experts believe up to 70% more learning takes place in "Informal Learning" environments than "Formal Learning" environments like classrooms, libraries, media labs, etc. Informal learning promotes skills in communication, collaboration, risk taking, creative (expressive) thinking, and it sparks curiosity, play, innovation, and relationship-building. Everyone is both a learner and teacher. Today's students–more than ever in a post-COVID world–need authentic learning opportunities to connect with their peers, staff, and communities for a better tomorrow.

Benches! They drastically changed the perception of the lobby. Students sitting on new lobby benches.

Simply creating a space for positive social interaction: Students sitting in the redesigned lobby.

Students in their new welcoming lobby.

> "Remarkable things can happen when we come together in small groups."
>
> **–Henry Hemming**

Designing "Integrated Cross-Generational Learning Environments" builds a culture of collaboration. It is increasingly understood that common spaces have valuable educational opportunities. An example of CIC's community "Informal Learning Space" design took place in one high school's main lobby by adding comfortable seating and an art display system. These changes and additional design improvements had an instant positive impact. Students, staff, and community members were now provided an environment which supported natural social interactions. It was exciting to witness senior citizens sitting and interacting with high school students during intermissions of musicals, school functions, and other community events. The lobby was transformed into a comfortable multipurpose space that became a place to exchange thoughts and ideas while encouraging informal cross generational interactions.

How do you create and design "Informal Learning" spaces? It is important to be open minded and flexible when brainstorming potential spaces. Recognize that your school may have opportunities which have not been developed. Assess underutilized interior spaces and areas throughout your campus. Consider the life cycle of the school. How might your school adapt and change as students and teachers adapt and change? How will the informal learning spaces integrate with the community? Will your redesign be multipurpose, flexible, and adaptable to support a multi-generational community?

USE THE ARTS AND DESIGN AS VEHICLES FOR POSITIVE CHANGE!

Lobbies and Common Areas

As a reminder, when developing your makeover projects, it's necessary to comply with building codes. Every school has a facilities director/manager who is a great resource and can help navigate your team's Game Plan. It's important to be creative and flexible when working with codes and any restrictions that may develop. Your initial design may need revisions to comply. An example of a design revision in order to comply with fire codes was a CIC guidance lobby and hallway makeover. The initial plan called for reclaimed wood wainscot (wall paneling) to be installed. The facilities manager checked with the local Fire Department and was informed that there were too many flammable materials in the initial design. The CIC team revised their interior design plan to meet code. Less wood (flammable material) was used along with faux finishing the cinder block walls to achieve the wood grain effect desired.

In addition to the wainscot, an "information management" system was created. Brightly painted bulletin boards for each grade level were installed. Leftover paints were used to create "Pour" paintings and included in the makeover. The stark hallway was transformed into a welcoming, vibrant, engaging space.

Students creating a "Pour Painting" with

Pour Painting installed on lobby wall.

Faux finishes and wainscot transform a generic white hallway.

Interior Signage

"Wayfinding" is navigating and finding one's way to locations, through buildings, and outdoor spaces. Knowing where to go and how to move from place to place is of utmost importance. There are elements in your branding and color palette that can readily be integrated in your signage and wayfinding. Remember signage needs to be consistent with and support your branding. Building upon your branding and incorporating it into your interior signage adds great value to once generic hallways. Find a balance between messaging and creativity in your signage. Wayfinding signage doesn't have to be restrictive in its design. This is a design opportunity to promote your branding, mission and values. Be aware that "overusing your branding" will hinder the wayfinding impact by blurring the message and directions. It is also a poor use of design. Signage should be sharp, welcoming, and easily readable.

Mosaic signage made from left over linoleum floor tiles.

Furniture

Furniture is a key element in your school's interior design of classrooms and informal spaces. Tables, seating, technology, etc., need to adapt to ever changing demands of instruction and learning. Well planned furniture will support differentiated learning. Having the ability to reconfigure "learning spaces" will accommodate a variety of learning and teaching styles. Maintaining flexibility that allows seamless transitions between lessons, project work, lectures, and discussions will yield positive opportunities for classroom performance and social behavior. Arrangements provide freedom to experiment, move easily for cleaning and multiple uses. Being adaptable and flexible in your approach is critical in creating active learning spaces.

Furniture design and affordability evolve as does technology. Do your research and discover what products will meet your needs and budget. Integrating a variety of furniture styles may yield positive outcomes. A mixed use of high cafe tables and chairs along with sectional furniture, benches and tables of different heights can transform a lobby into an interactive "informal learning" environment. Furniture that includes your expanded color palette and branding will visually connect the spaces throughout your school and campus. Reconfiguring drab common areas and incorporating flexible and comfortable furniture dramatically changes interior spaces, behaviors, and the ethos of the school.

High top tables and chairs create a warm environment in a school's lobby.

Trash bin and screen covers using reclaimed wood.

A stairwell splash using school's branding and logo.

Displaying artwork on stairwell wall using CIC display molding.

A student installing an exhibit.

Walls and Hallways

Make walls and hallways come alive!!
A vast number of schools' real estate is located in hallways and passageways. Their initial purpose is to provide access throughout the school. How can walls and hallways become "informal learning" opportunities?

Generic white walls transformed with color accents can make a huge impact. The challenge is to design walls that become alive and interactive. Inspirational words and quotations, use of color, photographs, "information management" systems, and display systems, are tools you can use to transform your interior spaces. In addition to improving your school climate, students and passers-by in hallways will have an opportunity to absorb and reflect. Do not overdo it. Use colors wisely. Have a theme and plan of consistency. Use highlighted colors sparingly, thoughtfully, and tastefully. Understanding "breathing room" is important when collectively

Local photographer's work becomes a permanent collection in a school's library.

designing halls, walls, and floors. Less is more. Stay away from design that is too busy or overstimulating. Maintain the design principles of balance, unity, and harmony. Give students & passers-by in hallways an opportunity to absorb and reflect through comfortable messages that are positive in nature.

A cost-effective way to enliven and engage your stakeholders is to install effective and flexible display systems. Student work shown in high traffic areas creates a stronger bond and appreciation throughout the school. Having the opportunity to showcase rotating exhibits is also a great way to connect your school and community. One high school that completed a high priority makeover project installed a display system in their main lobby. This improvement allowed them to exhibit a well-known local photographer's works. The synergy that was generated from the historic black and white photographs was palpable. The reactions and connections to the works displayed supported the goals of the makeover project. Since that installation took place, several other local artists have exhibited their works in this space. The ongoing outreach with the community continues to reinforce the positive relationships with the school.

Floors

Flooring is more surface area to use when expanding your logo, branding and elements of design. As previously noted, the CIC helped redesign a main lobby at a high school by developing an interesting mosaic design, introducing an expanded color palette, while adhering to some of the traditional designs of the school.

Splash of color! Linoleum tile outside classroom door using school branding.

Bathrooms and Water Fountains

Often overlooked on schools' campuses are their bathroom facilities. In the "business world" water fountains and break rooms are areas where people congregate, collaborate, and exchange ideas. The same holds true for school campuses. Take advantage of these often-overlooked pieces of real estate and transform them into vibrant and functional "informal learning" spaces.

At the same time, bathrooms and water fountains can be trouble spots, challenging areas to monitor, and often regarded as places for problems waiting to happen. Address these concerns by refocusing efforts to transform these necessary places into areas that are welcoming, positive, bright, and safe.

By designing cost effective accents, signage, upgrading countertops, and general facilities, you will bring these spaces out of the "shadows" of the school. These areas are smaller in scale, are used on a regular basis by all of the school's stakeholders.

Reason to Smile! Student in Action!

Linoleum is a relatively inexpensive product that can be used in creative and interesting ways to highlight and design hallways and lobbies. Linoleum can also be incorporated in signage. One school included several colored linoleum tiles from their expanded palette as accents in front classroom doorways. These small "splashes of color" added life to the once generic hallways. It also gave each classroom/department the opportunity to develop their own identity within the larger color palette, thus maintaining a consistency of design.

An aesthetically pleasing, functional, and fun bench made from reclaimed wood and metal.

Mixed Media

From a design perspective, it is always fun and interesting to take a mixed media approach. Using different elements brings depth, interest, and engagement into workspaces. Metal, wood, ceramic, are all affordable and readily available to help create items that will speak to the viewer. We have been involved with several projects using reclaimed materials to build functional furniture that works well and fits in thoughtfully within its surroundings.

LIGHTING: A Bright Outlook

It's important to consider light and how it interacts with surroundings and environment. Take advantage of the natural light and make sure not to block or inhibit its direct impact on the space. Light adds warmth and brightness to the space. Take advantage of the well-documented health and cognitive benefits of natural light. Be cognizant of Seasonal Affect Disorder (SAD) in children and adults. Understand how light in certain areas affects those in proximity. It is important to be aware of these issues in order to create an atmosphere that is relaxed, comforting, balanced, and calming.

There are also creative ways to enhance the generic non-descript lighting sources that many schools have been using for years. Small "plexi renderings" can be made using branding colors and placed strategically throughout the complex with lighting fixtures. These small transparent pieces of plexi, will allow

the light to shine unrestricted, while illuminating the branding colors. These accents will subtly reinforce one's branding colors while weaving design consistency throughout the facility.

Natural light through windows can also provide a great backdrop. These often-ignored spaces can be turned into exciting and interesting areas for display. The CIC facilitated such a use of interior space in a school stairwell. We commissioned a professional sculptor (who happened to be an alum) to create a public art installation. The reclaimed wood sculpture transformed the space with a series of engaging penguins learning to climb, sky dive, and grow.
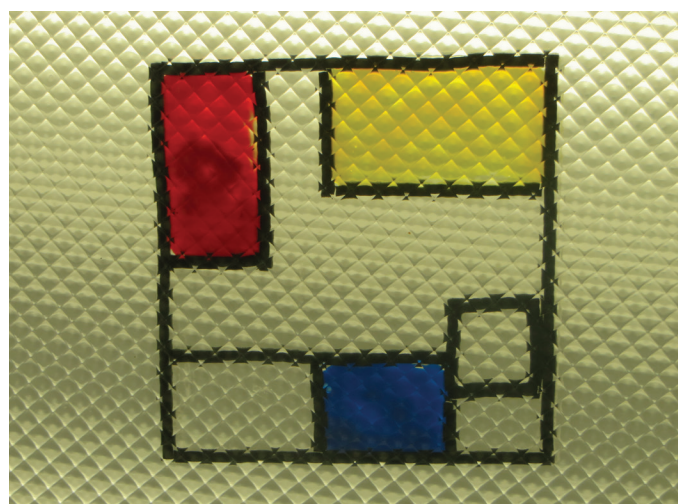
A creative accent of color. Plexiglass rendering for florescent ceiling light.

Be sure to use natural lit areas in positive ways, don't abuse it. We observed one school that applied their enlarged school logo (9-foot diameter), over a prominent architectural window. The intent was good. The result was dismal. The window is now a distraction rather than being a strong architectural element on its own, no longer allowing natural light into the common space.

Commissioned "Penguin" sculpture by *Individuals Collective* Boston, MA.

The CIC facilitated a lighting project in a high school auditorium. The entrance was tight and dark. The school used an ineffective, dingy drop light to illuminate the space. The CIC collaborated with two local artisans to design and fabricate a welcoming light box. The costing was manageable as the resources used were minimal, and some of the labor required was donated as in-kind work. This improvement is both visually interesting and fun, while providing the required lighting for the space.

Research indicates that lighting in schools affects student performance, engagement, and mood. Task-appropriate lighting can have a positive impact in the classroom. School lighting upgrades can favorably affect budgets too. Upgrading school light fixtures and adding controls can significantly reduce energy costs. Everyone wins when lighting solutions not only help create an optimized learning environment but also reduce energy use, lower maintenance costs, and comply with codes and budgets.

RESEARCH INDICATES THAT LIGHTING IN SCHOOLS AFFECTS STUDENT PERFORMANCE, ENGAGEMENT, AND MOOD.

4

Exterior Designs

What do people see when they approach your school?

When approaching your school, what are the first branding/design elements and landmarks your stakeholders see? It's important to capitalize on your maximum appeal through your exterior buildings and grounds. Signage, buildings, landscaping, maintenance, and future upkeep are all critical components in supporting the ethos of your school. Your exterior spaces ultimately convey your school's culture. Being warm, interesting, clear, and inviting enhances everyone's experiences daily.

Exterior design improvements likely fall in your Game Plan's "Secondary and Future Phases." The team assessing your real estate may discover and expand flexible outdoor "informal learning" and common spaces for the school, events, and the community. Transforming the outside of your facility will be a beacon of positive energy for students, staff, and your community neighbors.

Exterior Signage

Exterior signage is an extension of your brand. One of the first impressions your stakeholders have of your school brand is its exterior signage. It is vital to reinforce your brand "face" and mission by incorporating visual elements. Therefore, signage needs to be instantly recognizable. It should not be complicated and can be affordable. Signage should complement the aesthetics of your buildings and campus. Don't make this signage an afterthought. Signage provides the public with important first impressions and recognition.

There are three categories of Exterior Signage:

1 Identity (Branding)
2 Wayfinding
3 Information/Announcements

Signage must comply with zoning ordinances, regulations, and ADA (Americans with Disabilities) requirements.

> "Design an engaging (school) environment children and adults want to attend every day."
>
> **—John Oderda, Education by Design**

1 IDENTITY SIGNAGE (BRANDING)

Successful signage needs to consider not only design, but size, illumination, and placement. How can you develop captivating and effective signage that will help your school standout? How does your identity differ from other schools? Developing and building on one's exterior branding will set a tone that speaks to your stakeholders. Your school should be a place where people feel comfortable, welcomed, and celebrated daily.

Be proud of your buildings and your campus, and above all, be a good neighbor. A unifying theme throughout your campus will reinforce and support the messaging while encouraging further connections with the overall school community. Finding creative ways to upgrade existing signage strengthens these connections and open doors to positive ways of interpreting staid and outdated messaging.

The CIC worked with one high school to establish new signage that incorporated their new brand identity. Old plastic letters were replaced with custom-designed stainless-steel letters. The new signage was a bold change for the school and sent a strong message to all. It was upgraded in a way that the school's signage became relevant while adding much more warmth and interest to the building and campus.

Testing new design font for exterior signage.

New school lettering on chimney.

TRANSFORMING THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR FACILITY WILL BE A BEACON OF POSITIVE ENERGY

2 WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

Road and street signage needs to be immediately instructional to the public. Wayfinding must help navigate vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians safely to the buildings and through the grounds. Find a balance between messaging and creativity in your signage. Wayfinding signage doesn't have to be restrictive in its design. Remember, this is a design opportunity to promote your branding, mission, and values.

3 INFORMATION AND ANNOUNCEMENT SIGNAGE

Most schools have "message center" signage located in prominent locations. Your options depend on what your budget allows. Signs can range from LED to sandwich boards and handmade banners. The messaging is the same; to inform the public of upcoming events, announcements, birthdays, etc. All signage should be instantly readable and catch the public's eye.

Another example of new font: Gym Sign.

Exterior Lighting

Exterior light for schools needs to support the safety and wellbeing of its stakeholders. At the same time, well planned lighting should positively add to the overall design and to the school's brand and ethos. Lighting will dramatically improve your school's environment and campus. Become knowledgeable about cost effective, daylight based, and energy saving lighting opportunities.

How are your buildings and campus used in the evenings and off hours? Does the school and community use your facilities for evening events such as sporting events, plays, adult education classes, community meetings, etc.? How will you keep your stakeholders safe? What messages do you want to communicate to people who see your school and campus at nighttime?

Your outdoor landscape looks very different in the evenings and at night. Your wayfinding and security concerns will change depending on the time of day. Be practical with your outdoor lighting applications. Safety and security are most important throughout your campus. Parking lots, walkways, curbs, etc., all need to be well lit for wayfinding and for providing security. Exterior lighting will also help deter vandalism and loitering while creating a positive environment. Consistent exterior lighting design will provide an increased sense of safety, calmness, and support.

Your design team needs to do their research. Ever developing lighting technologies continually change and improve. There are products such as LED solutions that reduce maintenance. There is technology that controls light levels based on the time of day and night. Strive to reduce your energy use. Look to be cost effective and aesthetically pleasing while providing safety and well-designed illumination.

A note on LED: "Light Emitting Diode" technology is a highly visible and effective messaging tool, but LED signage needs to be a good neighbor: understand what impact LED lights have on the neighborhood. "Light pollution" is a sensitive issue for many communities. Some public surveys indicate information displayed on electronic message boards are often too fast to read. Thus, the information/announcement is not clear. Have the ability to regulate the pacing and timing of the messaging. Once again, the team needs to educate themselves with zoning ordinances and regulations.

Informal Learning and Common Spaces

There are likely hidden areas in your school that can be transformed into informal learning and common spaces. Geographic locations directly impact the opportunity to utilize your school's campus. Study the traffic flow, foot traffic, and general patterns of daily activity. This data is necessary to understand the movements and interactions of your stakeholders. This information will provide further clues as to how best to develop and work with your real estate more effectively.

Urban, suburban, and rural schools all have different opportunities and challenges. School location and population density may influence your outdoor options. Cold weather climates provide different

outdoor offerings than warm weather climates. Igloos may provide unique learning spaces in the north country but won't last too long in the hot southern sun! Having the ability to create outdoor classroom spaces additionally supports alternative methods to teach, learn, and collaborate. Designing exterior informal learning spaces will add great depth visually and experientially, while effectively strengthening bonds and ownership for everyone.

Exterior common sitting space and garden. The new fence shields mechanical elements.

Common Spaces

Consider incorporating benches, walkways, fencing, gardens, picnic tables, and sculptural work in your makeover plans. All add great value to undeveloped and underutilized exterior spaces. Every school has unseemly areas… locations for dumpsters, disposal facilities, mechanical infrastructure, and general maintenance equipment. Sometimes, this unsightly, yet necessary equipment is often located in high traffic and visually important areas. This scenario reflects poorly on the school. Having these unsightly functional elements in full view is not welcoming and sends a negative message to its stakeholders and community. Makeover design solutions can be achieved by being creative. Fencing, gardens, sculptural pieces, can all be used to shade and cover unseemly yet necessary infrastructure.

Fencing

Fences can support the needs of your school. Do they help facilitate traffic directions and wayfinding? Do they help keep the stray soccer, basketball, and softballs from drifting too far afield? Do they blend with gardens to distinguish property boundaries? Do they keep people in or out? Are they good neighbors?

Attractive upgrades do not need to be expensive or time consuming. One CIC project involved installing a section of panel fencing in a high traffic area where large ventilation fans and dumpster units were located. By not only concealing these infrastructure units, but the fence also created a warm and interesting backdrop for further work (gardens, bench, sculpture) to be incorporated on the grounds.

Remember: Don't be afraid to reach out to community members and organizations for funding and support. They may be very helpful with your efforts to revitalize outdoor spaces. Local vendors and businesses are often willing to donate their time and help defray costs. The public should recognize the importance of its schools. Schools are valuable public institutions and anchors of communities.

One example of incorporating fencing in a larger makeover project took place at an entrance to a school's campus. Shorter sections of split rail fencing were installed on the corners of a central green space. The fencing defined and supported wayfinding and traffic flow and brought warmth to the exterior campus. The split rail design was selected to discourage loitering and sitting. This fencing brought focus to these areas and created new opportunities. Small flower gardens in front of the fencing sections transformed the campus. The flower bulbs and the fencing were both provided at a discounted rate by local businesses and national chain stores.

Fences and gardens improve the school's campus.

Gardens and Grounds

It's important to work with people who have knowledge and an overall understanding of gardening and landscape design. Long-range planning and budgeting are vital. Well intentioned volunteers are important; however, someone with detailed knowledge of plants and horticulture is key. Gardens need care and maintenance on a continual basis. It is great to make these changes and the effects will be instantly recognizable, but at the same time, it is important to understand that there will be upkeep on an annual basis to these new additions and upgrades. An overall plan to maintain and manage these areas on a regular basis is key to keeping these additions in good shape for years to come.

The CIC worked with a school where businesses and artisans collaborated to reinvigorate a downtrodden exterior space at their school. Brick walkways and sitting areas were created with the help of a local building salvage yard that donated reclaimed bricks, a local masonry outfit that donated sand and guidance, a local artisan who donated design time and supervision with the work, and the school maintenance department who provided manpower and assistance.

The garden installation included students, classes (math, art, homeroom/advisory, and special ed.) and qualified staff throughout the entire process. They formulated long-range plans, approached potential donors, cleaned, and painted bricks, calculated the quantity of material for the areas, and were involved with the manual labor for the gardens. The end results transformed the school's landscape and grounds into a positive and energizing experience for all who frequent the campus.

Exterior Furniture

Exterior furniture, like signage, communicates your mission, values, and goals. Incorporate benches, seating areas, picnic tables, and trash bins in your master landscape design plan. Furniture is integral in supporting your exterior informal learning spaces. Be creative in including exterior furniture throughout your campus. Your exterior furniture options may be limited based on your

Classes using outdoor learning spaces.

school's location, but it is still important to have this conversation with your makeover team. Is there an opportunity to incorporate outdoor furniture? What purpose will this serve? Will benches encourage loitering? As opportunities allow, furniture should be engaging, aesthetically warm and inviting, functional, and fun!

Your exterior campus should be viewed as a blank canvas, like the interior of your facility. View the overall landscape as a way to support and define the overall ethos and mission of your programs. Adding interesting and informative signage, warm and inviting landscape design, creating functional and aesthetically pleasing common areas for socializing, teaching, and celebrating, will all go a long way to transforming your school and community center.

Remember, you do not need to address every outside concern all at one time. Identify your priorities and little by little, create a plan and a task force to upgrade and develop certain areas. You will begin to transform your overall campus one brick, one bench, one fence post, one bulb, one garden at a time!

5

PROJECTS

The following examples of CIC directed projects provide concrete examples and inspiration for you to reference as you develop your transformational process. It is always interesting to learn from others and then carve out your personalized approach. Plan to address challenges and projects that are uniquely yours. Put your own stamp and interpretation on the work that supports your ethos and mission, while inspiring your school and community. Be brave and don't be afraid to take risks!

High-Impact Projects

THE MONDRIAN SPOT

The entry at one high school was outdated and stark. You could view stakeholders entering and leaving the facility usually with their heads down, going to and from without much interaction or joy.

Using the arts as a vehicle for change, one school's steering committee tapped into the 20th C. artist Piet Mondrian as inspiration for painting their foyer at the school's entrance and lobby. Bold primary colors helped to transform the generic cinder block walls into a colorful transitional space to start and end everyone's day. It's warm, inviting, and thought provoking. The walls say, "Have a Good Day!"

> "Just walking in the door, it says 'Hello, Let's Rock'n Roll, Welcome!'"
>
> **–Dean of Students**

> "We view each project as a group of smart people working together to make something great, to imagine the new, the next, the better and then building it piece by piece."
>
> **–THERE, We Build Brands, "Identity, What We Do,"**
> https://therestudio.com/

School foyer: Walls are alive with color, interest, and warmth!

CIC worked with one school where the team identified their school lobby as a "High Impact" area. Their lobby was prime real estate and the major thoroughfare for the majority of students, staff, night classes, and the entire community daily. In this space there was no place for students or visitors to sit down in the main lobby. The former administration felt providing students with a place to "hang-out" in the lobby area would breed negative behavior. The lobby was stark and cold and yet, this was the main entrance and exit to the school facility. The team recognized the need to improve this space. The current principal gave the team autonomy to develop their Game Plan and make decisions on how to move forward.

An unhealthy place to be hanging out!
Students sitting on the school's cold lobby floor.

PUT YOUR OWN STAMP AND INTERPRETATION ON THE WORK THAT SUPPORTS YOUR ETHOS AND MISSION

The work in this lobby included reworking the tile floor with a design that introduced the school's expanded color palette and developing interior signage. Knowing they needed a ten-day window to renovate, the team targeted a "holiday break" as the time to schedule the lobby makeover project. Volunteer students, faculty, parents, and community members had a limited time to complete the project. This work included demolition and stripping the old tile, installing new tile, painting the foyer and display case, installing benches and a new art display system, and a new welcome sign.

This ten-day project was a concentrated effort that was very time consuming. The design and color palette were established by the team. Volunteer students began the first days of their holiday break stripping old tile and painting foyer. The holiday break began on a Wednesday at 2:45 pm. Students, staff and community members started the demolition work at 3 pm. Pizza was served for dinner and the first workday ended at 7:30 pm. A local flooring business discounted the new tile and undertook its installation, giving the finished product a professional edge and safe surface ready for use.

Having a healthy understanding of the time and energy required should not be underestimated! The team needs to prepare to find a balance between volunteer time and professional time. Project leaders need to know they may spend a great deal of time and energy planning the execution of the
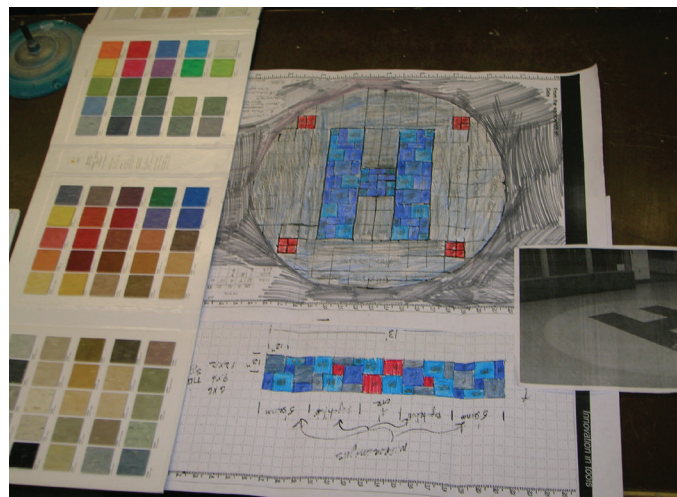
Design for new lobby floor.

A real team effort. Students and volunteers remove lobby floor tile.

Creating a more comfortable and enjoyable environment. Students sitting on new lobby benches.

makeover project. Their willingness, commitment and devotion are critical to a positive outcome. These key people must recognize the importance of the makeover work and the impact it will have. Ultimately, it will far outweigh limited or no monetary compensation.

The results of the school's makeover project were dramatic! The atmosphere and the energy within the lobby was significantly enhanced. Learning and social spaces were now created. These spaces changed interactions with the exchange of ideas and conversations. Opportunities that allowed crossed generational conversations and visits were developed. Transforming this once merely "pass through" space into a warm and interesting area was a huge first step for this particular school. Creating an environment that was now welcoming, interesting, comfortable, and thought-provoking was a great way to start and end everyone's day.

Again, beware of the "naysayers." There were people that said nothing nice would last and there would be damage inflicted upon the improvements. They gave a timetable of two weeks before vandalism would occur. As it happened, nothing could have been further from the truth. Demonstrating that people care about you and are interested in improving your facility in a positive way, resonates with everyone. The disenfranchised students as well as those more engaged enthusiastically welcomed the improvements to their school.

Exterior Mural and Pediment

We worked with a high school to unify parts of their exterior campus. An exterior mural and stainless steel pediment were integrated with the school's new design, messaging, and branding. Over the years, the school had constructed buildings that did not relate well with each other. Their side by side rooflines were haphazard in design and there was little connection, relationship, and flow between the buildings.

To the school's credit, they commissioned the CIC to develop a plan that provided continuity and created a subtle, yet, strong message for the community. This project included a stainless-steel pediment connecting the rooflines. An exterior mural was created by students under the direction and guidance of a school/CIC committee and an artist-in-residence. New LED lighting highlighted the mural and pediment in the evening hours. The school's inspirational mural and pediment offers an amazing visual and distinctive welcoming element for everyone on the school campus.

Developing this architectural element led to further exterior improvements throughout the campus. The school's main signage included exterior plastic letters that were broken and cracked. The CIC designed a custom font to replace the old plastic exterior lettering which had hung for over 50 years.

The new stainless letters were mounted with 2-inch spacers to create depth, shadows, and add a strong visual dimension to the message. The new signage was a bold and positive change for the school. The new signage supported the school's branding and continuity throughout its campus.

Volunteer designing new exterior signage.

School's previous front entry façade.

Students creating an exterior mural.

New mural, lighting, and pediment.

Secondary Projects Flooring/ Tile Accents

Linoleum tile is a relatively inexpensive product that can be used in creative and interesting ways to highlight and design hallways and lobbies. Consider using leftover tiles as accents throughout the facility, you are better able to maintain consistency, while adding color and interest to the overall grounds.

Examples of this approach were used in a school's hallways and stairwells. Colorful tiles were used outside of the classroom doors. These tile accents defined the entrances, breaking up the generic hallways, while providing splashes of color and energy.

In addition, colored tiles were used to rework hallway stairs. Several steps were highlighted with colorful new tiles, adding lots of interest to the stark hallway. Small accents have large impacts. A team of students were directly involved in taking out the old tiles and replacing them with new colorful ones.

Installers working on new lobby tile floor design.

Students take the lead in reworking
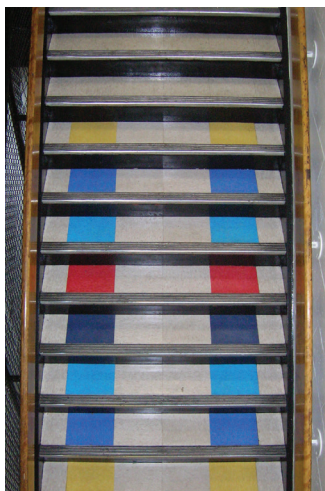
Tile accents change the feel of the stairwell.

Decades old broken plastic signage.

Repurposed large plastic letters/signage by students and artists.

Repurposing Signage/Letters

The discarded letters provided incentive for another creative project. The plastic letters were repurposed into a permanent art installation at the school. Each letter was distributed to local artists, interested community members, and interested students and staff. The individuals were assigned the challenge of decorating their letter.

The finished letters were then mounted on plywood faced with neutral wallpaper as a backing. The result was dramatic, and the project continues to garner positive reviews from everyone. Taking the tired old letters, repurposing them and putting them back together again as an artistic piece sends a strong message. Be creative, be bold, be collaborative, work collectively, in order to navigate a path that is inclusive, supportive, and interesting.

Interior Mosaic Signs

At one high school several classes experimented with some left-over linoleum floor tile to develop mosaic signage throughout their campus. After developing unified specific patterns, tiles were cut into mosaic size pieces, and then incorporated into interesting and attractive signs. Small colorful objects, mirrors, segments of stained glass, etc., highlighted the designs. These projects were challenging, fun, and meaningful, while contributing to their school's makeover project.

Visitors' and Welcome Signs

Be creative and interesting! Two signs that developed at two different schools added warmth and were welcoming to all that entered their respective facilities. One sign was a collaboration between an art teacher, a metal worker, and a local cabinet shop. Reclaimed metal pieces along with painted plywood were used to create a unique and informative welcoming and wayfinding sign.

The second sign board was a collaboration between students and teachers. Once the initial platform was established, the school went to work decorating it in a way to support its school's message. Everyone sees it walking in and out of their school every day this in-house "information management system" is viewed by all.

Interior mosaic signage.

Students working on mosaic sign project in art class.

Directional Weathervane Visitors' Sign.
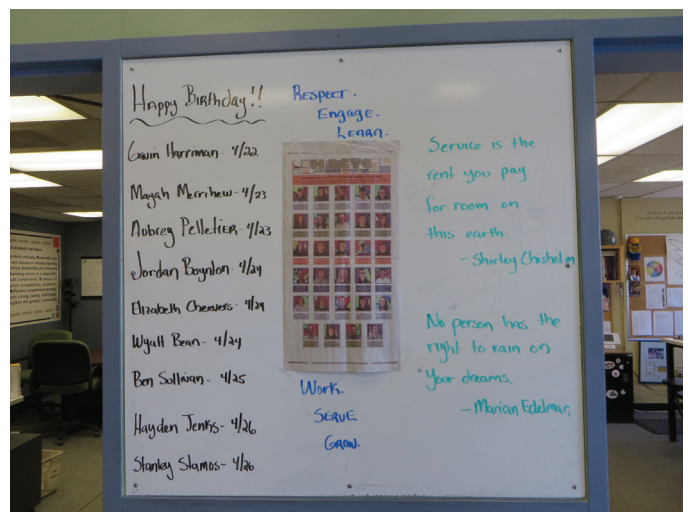
Simple, yet effective message board.

Trash Bin Covers

There are many schools that have generic gray colored trash cans located throughout their facility. The CIC designed practical solutions to recycling and trash bin needs. By creating covers, the unattractive, yet necessary, trash bins became more interesting elements. The trash bin covers started out as blank plywood canvases. The school's mission statement and values were then painted onto the covers by students. The sky's the limit in terms of how they are treated artistically. Students and staff love seeing the covers on a day-to-day basis while developing a deeper connection to the school and its grounds. Being painted the trash bin covers can be updated by the next rising future students.

As with much of the CIC approach, there are many levels of the work. In one instance, students from a high school art class volunteered to be "trash bin cover makeover leaders," collaborating with special needs classes. Having developed their own covers, they were now ready to share their knowledge and lead the transformational process with other students to help empower and engage on a deeper psychological level. Much more going on here than coloring four-sided trash can covers!

A trash bin is a trash bin, is a trash bin.

Students designing trash bin covers.

Recycle Bins

The challenge here was to provide an interesting cover for generic recycle cans. Knowing that the cans were regularly emptied, it was important to devise a system that was easy to use yet adding interest to the facility and hiding the unattractive but necessary.

Everyone is in on the act: A happy custodian!

Reclaimed wood trash bin covers.

We worked with a local cabinet shop and a technical center to develop a design that would address these issues. A mixed media approaches greatly added to the success of the project. Technical center students constructed the metal framework and provided the CNC (Computer Numeric Control) computer driven signage. A local woodworker assembled the bins with reclaimed material. Placing the wooden/ metal screening on wheels allowed for easy access and maintenance. The bins were functional and aesthetically pleasing while streamlining the recycling process.

Maintenance installing decorative and functional storage unit.

Storage Shelves/Cubbies/Benches

The CIC worked with a school that had a need for expanded student storage for their sports equipment (hockey, lacrosse, baseball, etc.). The generic school lockers did not meet the needs of their student body. At this particular school, theft and vandalism were not issues. Our solution was to create open integrated shelving units as well as benches with cubby spaces underneath.

Students participated in the surface design and painting of the new furniture. In addition to being exceptionally functional, the painted storage units were exciting, varied and added life to stark hallways.

Lost and Found Bench.

Lost and Found Bench

One school used a large, dilapidated cardboard box as their "Lost and Found" bin. The "sad" cardboard box was in a central area and often overflowed with a variety of lost items. The CIC designed a multi-purpose piece of furniture using locally sourced reclaimed materials. It serves both as a bench and vessel to hold lost clothing. The strategic location of the new bench allowed staff to monitor two converging hallways throughout the day. Additionally, the bench serves as an informal learning environment for many in the school. Consider the positive developments from substituting a cardboard box with a more thoughtful design and recognizing the value of important hallway "real estate."

Student and art teacher painting a storage unit bench.

Exterior (Repurposed) Benches

A lack of seating outside of one school's lobbies made for an unwelcoming place. Whether students were arriving or waiting for a ride after school, students sat on the pavement or walkways. Fortunately, in one scenario, a local business was updating some of their furniture and donated several benches to the school. The donated benches needed some modifications and were then installed undercover outside entrances. Everyone welcomed the outdoor furniture, and it is now used frequently throughout the day and afterschool by the whole community.

Garden Bench

Another example of engaging the community was the design and construction of an outdoor garden bench. Two local artisans collaborated on this bench that was one component of a larger outdoor garden project. Their mixed media approach (reclaimed metal and wood) paid tribute to the region's agricultural history. The wooden seat consisted of "live edge" plank that was donated by a local sawmill. The bench in the center of a small flower garden that students helped plant. Inspiration worded stones (discovery, joy, spirit, etc.) were sprinkled within the painted patio bricks. To complete the landscape design, the two artisans collaborated on an exterior sculpture again using agricultural farming elements as inspiration.

Students sitting on concrete at bus stop.

Happy students sitting on exterior benches.

New sculpture garden with bench, brick patio, and inspirational stones.

On-the-Horizon, In-Perpetuity Projects

In addition to routine maintenance and future projects, some projects are high-impact, on-going, and require periodic review and refreshing.

Display Systems

Display systems are a practical way to showcase student, faculty, and community projects. Rotating exhibits bring interest and creative interpretation front and center to a school and public facility. CIC's cost-effective display systems are easy to construct, unobtrusive in appearance, and provide endless flexibility.

Students painting new "display" system.

Art display system displays current exhibit.

Once your display system is installed you are now ready to host exhibits. Having the ability to display work at your school will further develop community outreach. Giving students and staff the opportunity to view how people interpret the world and issues through their work is important. At the same time, providing a platform for local artists to display their work and expand their reach to a wider audience is also a positive development.

This cost-effective display system provides convenience and flexibility while hanging horizontal and vertical objects. We used 11/2" standard box nails and standard 1" x 4" wooden trim. These materials can be purchased from lumber yards, hardware, or home improvement stores. The wooden

trim pieces may be painted with any color and the nails can be either regular finish nails or they can be painted as well. Locate and hammer nails 3" - 4" apart along the top edge of the molding. Securely attach the display molding to the wall approximately 8" below the ceiling.

Historic Regional Photographs

Every school, every community has a special history of its own. These connections come through loud and clear in historical photographs. One exciting venue to engage the community and all its stakeholders is to seek out and display regional historic photographs in your school. You will be pleasantly surprised with the positive reactions the photographs illicit. Students and staff will take great pleasure in having these photos shown at their facility. The instant connections to the landmarks, people, and events photographed will bring joy, interest, and a strong connection to the community's history.

The CIC led such a collaborative project. A local photographer was well known for his black and white photos taken in the 1950s. These timeless and alluring photographs were on loan and displayed in a school's lobby. The reactions were amazing. Hearing the feedback from students and staff was powerful. Viewers discussed the scenes, places, and people depicted in the photographs. Once again, the exhibit depicted local lore, history, and how some things change and how some things stay the same.

Local photographer's works adds to a school's permanent collection.

To further demonstrate the depth of such an approach, several teachers integrated these photos into their lesson plans. The art teacher used them to discuss photography, lighting, and subject matter. Several departments, (English, World Languages and History) used them as a platform for discussion, interpretation, and storytelling.

As a result of this exhibition, the school purchased sixteen of the historic photographs. They were framed and mounted by a local cabinet shop and then permanently displayed in the school library. The transformation to the library space was immediate and is appreciated by all who frequent the facility in addition to students and staff.

## Artists-in-Residence
Murals, Sculpture, Installations

"Artists-in-Residence" are a great way to engage and enliven your school. Every state has an Arts Council with a registry of Artists-in-Residence and grant information. Research local artists and artisans that are alumni who may be interested in working with your school.

Artist-in-Residence projects almost always include student participation. It may take the form of students suggesting visual ideas, words, and concepts that they want to express in the work. Often, students actively participate in the construction of the work.

One Technical Center that followed the CIC method hired a muralist to work over a two-year period. The muralist collaborated with the administration, staff, and students to decide what themes and characteristics they wanted to display on individual murals outside of their classrooms. The murals energized and transformed the hallways while developing stronger ties between the school's stakeholders.

Artists-in-Residence installing their works. "Individuals Collective" Boston, MA.
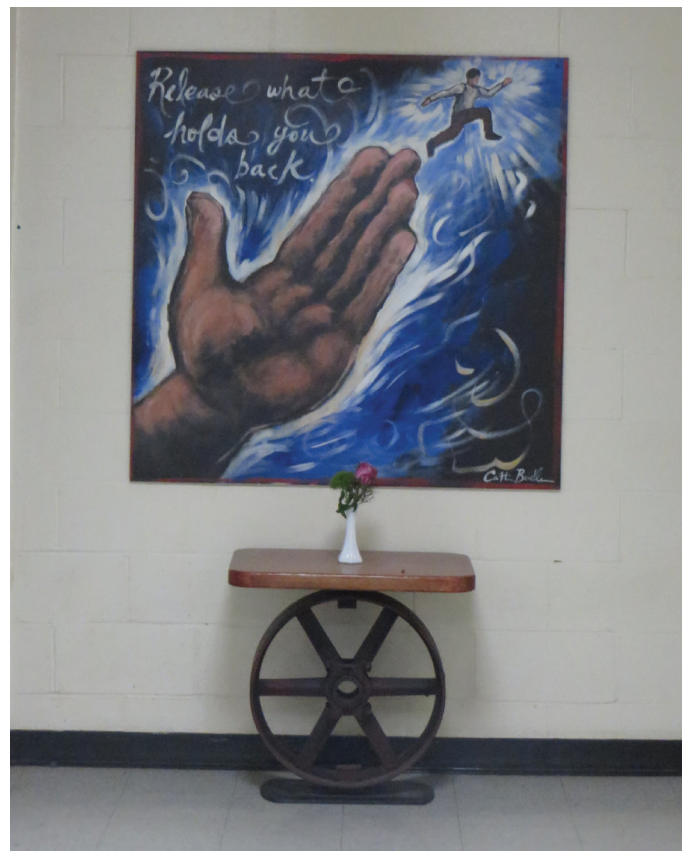
Mural and mixed media hallway installation.

CONCLUSION

We hope that we have been helpful in your pursuit to *Improve, Engage and Transform Your School* facility. There are many ways to undertake such important and necessary work to develop your "Game Plan." Learning from others, understanding what works and what doesn't, will provide you with opportunities to forge your own unique path successfully.

Best of luck!
Steven Sass and Andersen Thorp

6

DATA AND RESEARCH

Research confirms the conditions of school facilities have a direct impact on learning, teaching, overall education, and communities. School facility improvements should be recognized as extremely positive investments both short term and long term educational benefits. This is why we believe the CIC approach has significantly more relevance in the future of education. Many schools and school districts struggle to find ways to improve their tired and generic infrastructures. It is important to have good data highlighting the value of using art to transform learning spaces.

Following are three excerpts from education articles that shed light, support documentation, and research, explaining why school facility improvements are vital.

There is always something to learn...

**Maine Department of Education
Quarterly Newsletter
Volume 10 October 2019
Facilities & Construction**

The Maine Department of Education's Office of School Facilities and Transportation works to ensure that all Maine students have access to healthy, safe, and educationally appropriate facilities.

School facilities have a direct impact on student performance. Providing students with a high quality learning environment helps to ensure they are able to receive the education they need to reach their greatest level of achievement.

The Maine DOE provides financial and technical support and administers a variety of programs to assist Maine schools in addressing their facility needs, including temporary classroom space, health and safety repairs, building additions and renovations, and new school construction.
https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/facilities

**Fresco News "How School Facilities Improve A Child's School Experience."
October. 28, 2019**

Regardless of the country, good school facilities help determine the success of students and the effectiveness of a teacher's lesson. However, with tight budgets and staff costs, the condition of school facilities is often further down the list of priorities. Studies show that school facilities have an impact on the overall school experience of students and teachers. According to an article by Penn State University, school facilities affect teacher recruitment and retention. More importantly, they also affect the health, behavior and engagement of the students. Thus, adequate facilities make it easier for the school to deliver better education.

Many parents often do not consider the quality of school facilities as a factor in choosing a school for their children, looking only at exam rates. Good equipment and balancing academics with other important on-curriculum activities, whether science lab facilities or sports equipment. When a school invests in facilities, the benefits to the school go far beyond the initial capital costs.
https://www.fresconews.com/how-school-facilities-improve-a-childs-school-experience/

> "You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have."
>
> **–Maya Angelou**

A growing body of peer-reviewed research finds a relationship between school facility quality and student achievement. A 2002 review of the literature, compiled by Mark Schneider, the current director of the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education, found that, on average, researchers observed a difference in student achievement between above-standard buildings and substandard buildings to be 5 to 17 percentile points. The studies cited in this review, and most studies done since, find significant correlations between poor structural, conditional, and aesthetic attributes of school buildings (including lighting, temperature and thermal comfort, acoustics, and indoor air quality) and low student learning and achievement (Earthman, 2002; Uline & Tschannen-Moran, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, Office For Civil Rights, 2014). For example, a 2004 study of 226 schools in Houston, Texas, found that poor facility quality significantly reduced daily attendance and increased dropout rates (Branham, 2004).

Improving school facilities can have a positive effect on student performance, as found in a 2004 analysis of student achievement and indoor environmental compliance ratings in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), led by Jack Buckley, a former director of the National Center for Education Statistics. In the study, improvements that raised a school facility's overall environmental compliance rating from "worst" to "best" correlated to a 36-point average increase in a school's Academic Performance Index, a nearly 6% increase over the districtwide 2003 base (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2004b). Similarly, a 2014 study by economists at the University of Chicago and Princeton University on the effect of school construction in New Haven, Connecticut, found that students moving into a rebuilt or renovated school saw strong gains (0.15 standard deviations) in reading scores (Neilson & Zimmerman, 2014). And a 2017 study of the LAUSD found that moving students out of overcrowded and degraded school facilities and into new facilities brought about gains in both standardized test scores and non-cognitive measures of educational quality (Lafortune & Schönholzer, 2017).

Teacher Performance and Satisfaction

Researchers have also found that school facility quality affects teachers. For example, a 2002 survey of teachers in the Chicago Public Schools and the District of Columbia found that when teachers consider their school to be in poor physical condition, they are far more likely to report that they plan to leave their school or to leave teaching altogether than are teachers in facilities they consider to be in good or excellent condition (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2004a). A 2017 study led by a University of Michigan environmental health researcher found that improved ventilation and indoor air quality at schools improved teachers' self-reported job satisfaction (Batterman et al., 2017).

In short, it appears that good facility conditions can improve the teaching experience and reduce teacher turnover, while poor school conditions can hinder

teachers' work (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In particular, teachers delivering 21st-century education and preparing students for 21st-century jobs need such physical instructional elements as science labs, technology, and special education spaces. Aging school buildings that have not been modernized often lack these important features.

Researchers and education practitioners now see school climate and positive social relations as necessary ingredients for academic achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Thapa et al., 2013), and facilities play a strong role in these areas. Properly planned, designed, and maintained school facilities promote the health, well-being, and performance of children and adults in schools and even encourage children to want to come to school (Maxwell & Schechtman, 2012). In her study of 236 New York City middle schools, Cornell University environmental psychologist Lorraine Maxwell (2016) found that school building condition is linked to school climate and attendance, and higher ratings of school social climate predicted lower student absenteeism, which in turn predicted higher standardized test scores.

How School Buildings Affect Health and Community Well-being

Substandard school buildings and grounds can negatively affect the health of children and adults in schools (Uline & Tschannen-Moran, 2008). Researchers have found that exposures to mold, poor ventilation, uncomfortable temperatures, inadequate lighting, overcrowding, and excessive noise all have potential to harm student and teacher health, contribute to absenteeism, and reduce cognitive abilities — all of which affect academic achievement (Fisk et al., 2016). Dampness and mold in school buildings exacerbate children's and teachers' asthma symptoms (Dangman, Bracker, & Storey, 2005), and both children and teachers perform better with increased fresh air ventilation (Myhrvold, Olsen, & Lauridsen, 1996).

Researchers and education practitioners now see school climate and positive social relations as necessary ingredients for academic achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Thapa et al., 2013), and

facilities play a strong role in these areas. Properly planned, designed, and maintained school facilities promote the health, well-being, and performance of children and adults in schools and even encourage children to want to come to school (Maxwell & Schechtman, 2012). In her study of 236 New York City middle schools, Cornell University environmental psychologist Lorraine Maxwell (2016) found that school building condition is linked to school climate and attendance, and higher ratings of school social climate predicted lower student absenteeism, which in turn predicted higher standardized test scores.

Inadequate Facilities Disproportionately Affect the Poor

Capital funding for facility infrastructure remains the most regressive element of public education finance. On average, local districts are responsible for 82% of their capital budget, which covers building new schools and renovating existing facilities (Filardo, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). In contrast, on average, local school districts are responsible for only about 45% of their annual operating budget, which pays for teachers, staff, administration, materials, and facility maintenance and operations. The federal government historically contributes 10% on average for local education operating costs (mainly under Title I), but it provides less than 1% of total capital expenditures by U.S. public school districts, mainly through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for after-the-fact disaster recovery.

Because local school districts shoulder the vast majority of their capital facilities costs, poor and low-wealth districts are frequently unable to adequately maintain their buildings and grounds, much less modernize their schools. Therefore, districts and zip codes with higher enrollments of students from low-income families are more likely to have buildings in poor condition (Alexander & Lewis, 2014; Filardo et al., 2006).

Poor communities whose school facilities need the most attention have typically received the least facility funding, as seen in a national study of more than 146,000 school facility improvement projects

from 1995 to 2004, which found that the projects located in high-wealth zip codes had more than three times the capital investment than the schools in the lowest-wealth zip codes (Filardo et al., 2006). Recent studies of Texas (Rivera & Lopez, 2019) and California (Brunner & Vincent, 2018) both found that school districts with lower property values raised significantly less facility funding from local and state sources, compared to districts in areas with higher property values. These differences in funding mean that students from affluent districts are more likely to attend school in bright, comfortable, and healthy facilities, while students in poorer districts are likely to attend school in dilapidated, obsolete, and unhealthy facilities that pose substantial obstacles to learning and overall student well-being. Further, because they lack access to capital dollars, poorer districts end up making expensive emergency and short-term repairs out of their operating budgets — thus using the money that otherwise goes to pay teachers, purchase instructional equipment, and other day-to-day educational necessities. A 2015 study by University of California, Berkeley, researchers found that this is a pervasive problem across California — districts serving low-income families spend a higher proportion of their total education budget per student on the daily upkeep, operation, and repair of their facilities than do high-wealth districts (Vincent & Jain, 2015).

Older, less well-maintained buildings are also more vulnerable when natural disasters strike, leading their students to experience more adverse effects, such as dislocation and prolonged school closures. In 2005, a total of 372,000 students were dislocated in Louisiana as a result of Hurricane Katrina, with an estimated 160,000 dislocated for months and sometimes years. According to a 2017 report by FEMA, "older school facilities are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and in most cases school administrators do not have the financial resources to address these vulnerabilities" even though they have "a moral, and in many cases, legal responsibility to make these schools more resilient to disaster."

https://kappanonline.org/how-crumbling-school-facilities-perpetuate-inequality-filardo-vincent-sullivan/

Sometimes it takes a set of fresh eyes to see things with an objective perspective. In CIC's case, one summer, a motivated parent/community member initiated a discussion focusing on possible improvements that might be worth considering at his local high school. The parent reached out to faculty and staff who he hoped would be interested in a design review of the school and campus. The only person who responded to his invitation (initially sent to 20 staff members) was the chair of the high school's Art Department. The art teacher was skeptical. She anticipated this was a well-intentioned parent whose ideas would not work and was taking up valuable time and resources. Their initial meeting was held at the school attended by the parent, the art teacher and a school administrator. It was initially scheduled for forty-five minutes. Fortunately, the art teacher recognized the great possibilities and the meeting lasted 2 ½ hours!!

From this modest beginning, the parent (Steven Sass) and the art teacher (Andersen Thorp) launched the Creative Improvement Council. We are sharing our CIC story and journey. Having worked with several schools, it became immensely apparent how a "team" can make significant improvements for everyone at their facilities. Change is challenging. Using CIC's book as a compass, you will navigate your transformation successfully.

What will be your story?

Steven Sass and Andersen Thorp
CIC Founders/Directors

Steven Sass
Custom cabinet shop owner
and former soccer coach.

Developing a design and custom cabinet business in Vermont led to his team's work being featured on the cover of *This Old House magazine*. Steve's interest in the arts stems from a family background steeped in an appreciation and understanding of visual interpretation.

After having success in soccer and tennis at Middlebury College and then (briefly) playing pro soccer, Steve began his fine woodworking career. For over forty-five years he continues to combine his interests in art and design, sports and coaching.

These factors inspired Steve to help establish the non-profit "Creative Improvement Council," which uses the arts as a vehicle for positive change. His goals are to help schools, businesses, and communities develop strategies that engage and inspire their stakeholders and make the world a better place for everyone.

Andersen Thorp
Artist, Educator, and Historian

Andersen has taught art for over forty years in public and private schools in Vermont and Philadelphia. She's received numerous artistic and scholarly awards including a Fulbright Memorial Fund Award to Japan. In 2016, Andersen was named "National Art Teacher of the Year" by *Creative Outlook* magazine.

Andersen earned a bachelor's degree in Art Education from Moore College of Art and Design and a Masters degree in Liberal Studies from Dartmouth College. A person of multiple interests, talents, and passions, she is an authority on the life and times of the U.S. Senator Justin Morrill, father of the Land-Grant College Act. She's appeared on television and radio programs throughout the United States and lectured(s) at colleges and universities on Senator Morrill and his contributions to America's higher education for the working-class.