

CHAPTER



PLANS, PEOPLE, PRIORITIES

Why Have a Game Plan?	8
Building Your Team	9
Leadership	11
Student Involvement	11
Community Partners	12
A Few Words of Caution	12
Planning the Project	13
① Conversations	
② The Walk-About	
③ The Charette	
Establish Your Priorities	14
① "High Impact" Phase	
② On-Going Phase	
③ Future, On-the-Horizon Phase	
Funding	16
Publicity	18
Celebrate Your Successes	18
Checklist	18

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!**



“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

Artist-in-Residence: *Individuals Collective*.

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

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



Community Volunteer at Work.

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 “charrette.” (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 charrette 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 charrette, your Game Plan will begin to materialize.

Establish Your Priorities with a Three-Phase System

After your initial conversations, walk-about, 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.

