

CHAPTER



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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The entry at one high school was outdated and stark.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.



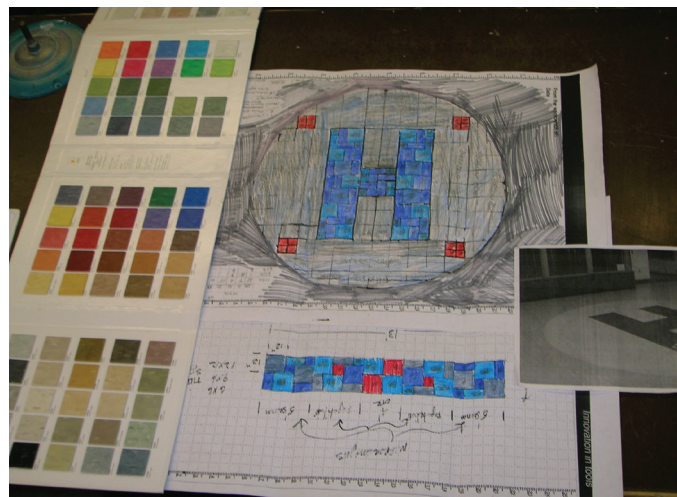
An unhealthy place to be hanging out!
Students sitting on the school's cold lobby floor.

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.

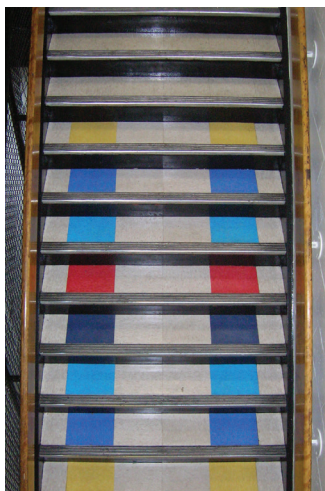
In addition, colored tiles were used to rework hallway stairs. Several steps were highlighted with colorful new tiles, adding lots of interest to the stark hallway. Small accents have large impacts. A team of students were directly involved in taking out the old tiles and replacing them with new colorful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



Interior mosaic signage.

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.

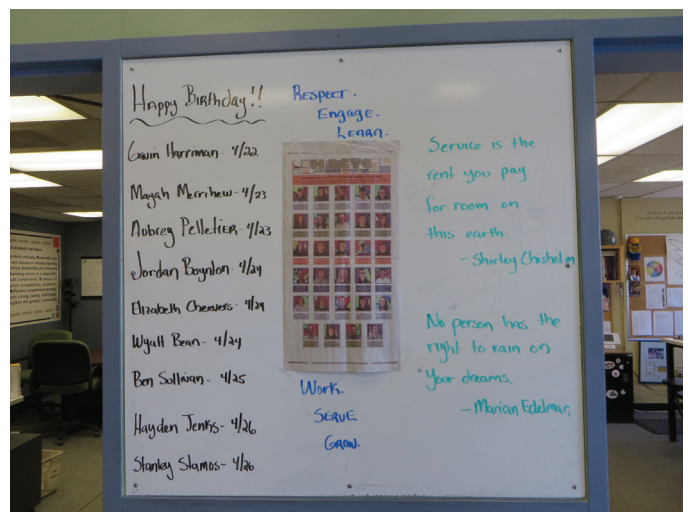
The second sign board was a collaboration between students and teachers. Once the initial platform was established, the school went to work decorating it in a way to support its school's message. Everyone sees it walking in and out of their school every day this in-house "information management system"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



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.



Everyone is in on the act: A happy custodian!

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.



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.



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.”



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.



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.



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



Students sitting on concrete at bus stop.



Happy students sitting on exterior benches.

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 1 1/2” 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

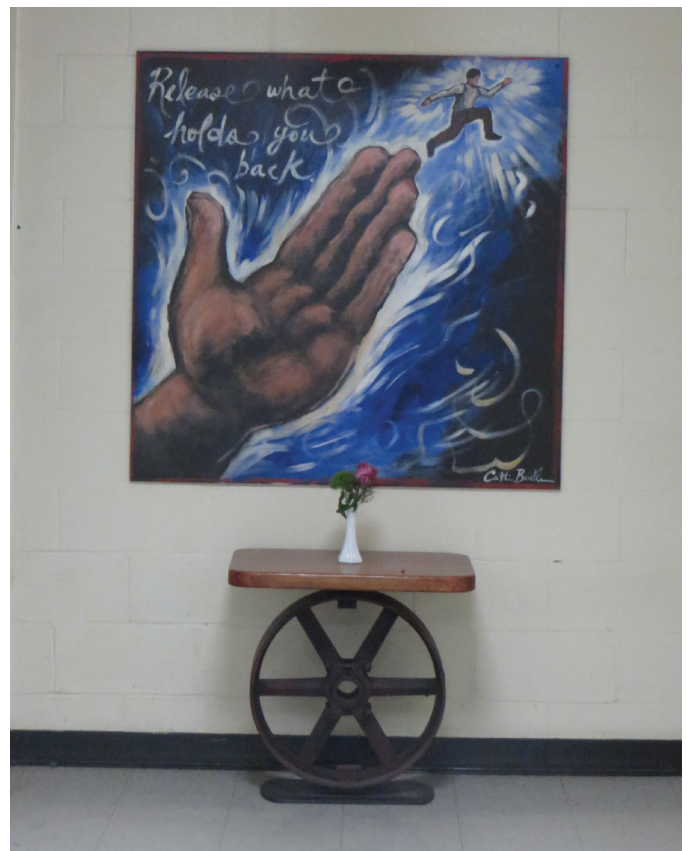
“Artists-in-Residence” are a great way to engage and enliven your school. Every state has an Arts Council with a registry of Artists-in-Residence and grant information. Research local artists and artisans that are alumni who may be interested in working with your school.

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

