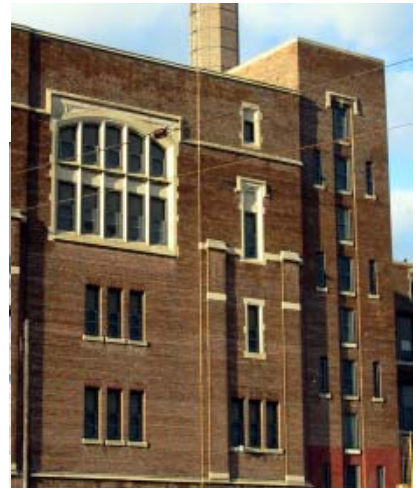


Kensington High Schools



Community Plan



Kensington High Schools for the Second Century
small schools, great places, building community

Kensington High Schools

Community Plan

Prepared by

Concordia, llc

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Kensington High Schools

Community Plan

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I. Executive Summary

Concordia, LLC and the Philadelphia Education Fund are pleased to present this school design and community planning report on behalf of the Kensington high school community that is the result of a seven month planning process. The planning process built upon the initial planning efforts of the Kensington High School Design Team and the small schools research conducted by students of Youth United for Change. When the Philadelphia Unified School District implemented its small school policy by reconfiguring Kensington High School into a cluster of small schools, the community started working to broaden the small schools discussion into a community participatory process.

The transformation of Kensington High School into four smaller schools involved members of the local community in making decisions about the schools' programs, site for a new campus and the use of local resources in supporting the schools. The school's transformation was also intended to serve as a catalyst for continuing positive change for the community and establish long term partnerships between the community and schools.

To help facilitate this conversation, The William Penn Foundation funded Concordia, LLC, a planning and architecture firm, and the Philadelphia Education Fund to lead the community in a seven month community planning process. Using a systemic planning approach, the community would explore and identify the community needs and resources, looking for ways to integrate programs and services in the development of new and renovated schools. The community searched for answers to the following questions. How can the schools better serve the community? How can the community support the neighborhood schools? How can we foster better methods of communication between the schools, District and community? Concordia's methodology of community planning also promoted the growth and development of local leadership and continued organizing beyond the masterplanning meetings to sustain the community's work.

Over the course of the planning process, more than 140 community members joined this discussion, devoting many hours researching potential solutions and strategies. The Steering Committee reached agreement on a broad vision for all Kensington schools. The Steering Committee envisioned the Kensington high schools as four autonomous neighborhood small schools with a common culture, offering students the benefits of small schools and large schools at the same time by sharing programs and resources. The high school would also become the center of the Kensington community.

This report provides an overview of the planning process, the community vision and mandate for change, the recommendations and proposed strategies for change, the school themes and site, ideas for reconfiguring the schools, and plans for the new facility. The community, the Concordia team, and the Philadelphia Education Fund are proud to present the results of this unique and authentic community decision-making endeavor.

III. Introduction

The school:

Kensington High Schools are located just one mile northeast of Center City Philadelphia and bordered by the Port Richmond, Fishtown and North Philadelphia communities. Formerly a large comprehensive high school serving over 1,400 students for the 2004-2005 school year¹, Kensington is now broken into three smaller high schools with three different themes: International Business and Entrepreneurship, Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) and Culinary Arts. Each school serves between 330 – 460 students, uses the School District of Philadelphia's standard curriculum, and offers electives focused on each theme.



According to Research For Action's Annual Progress Report of Philadelphia's Public Schools, for the 2004-2005 Pennsylvania State System Assessment (PSSA) exam, 13.3% of the Kensington comprehensive high school students were reading at or above grade level, 5.1% were at or above grade level in math² and 25.6% demonstrated writing proficiency³. The PSSA results show a school's performance for grades 5, 8, and 11 as the percentages of students in the four Pennsylvania performance levels. Beginning with this school year, 2005-2006, the PSSA will be administered to students in grades 3 through 8, and to grade 11 students in order to comply with the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act⁴.

Like many urban high schools in America, Kensington students were scoring low on state-wide exams, reporting low attendance rates, and graduating fewer students each year. The school was faced with the need to make serious changes in the performance levels of its students and improve the students' safety. The student population consisted of 29.2 % Black, 23.3% White, 2.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 44.8% Hispanic, and less than 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native⁵. Over 80% of these students came from the surrounding Kensington community; and the school reported a less than 50% graduation rate. According to the Philadelphia Public School Notebook, more than 25% of the students were absent daily⁶.

The community:

Kensington High School catchment area consists of portions of the Port Richmond, Fishtown and Kensington communities, with a few students traveling from North and Northeast Philadelphia⁷. Like many neighborhoods in Philadelphia, these communities were formed around manufacturing industries and originally populated by German, Irish and English immigrants. As industries left, so did the jobs and the population and income levels shifted. Poverty levels increased along with criminal and drug activity. These areas, however continuous geographically, constitute different neighborhoods with different socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.

The west Kensington community is a predominantly low income Latino community mainly composed mainly of Puerto Rican immigrants, including first and second generations. A large percentage of the community is under the age of 18. The median household income is \$19,088 and 80% of the households receive public assistance. This area also has the highest property vacancy rate (18%) and the lowest homeownership rate of all the neighborhoods of the Kensington area.



The east Kensington community consists of a mixed-income population with both Caucasian and Asian residents. The median household income is \$29,500 with a vacancy rate of 14%. The Fishtown/Northern Liberties and Richmond neighborhoods have a predominantly Caucasian population with varying levels of income. While the Richmond community shows a higher concentration of low-income residents, Fishtown is currently attracting outsiders who are

contributing to a rise in income levels. This process is contributing to increased real estate values in the area as well as a change in the nature of the neighborhood with the influx of newcomers. The median income for this neighborhood is \$35,077 and the median property value is \$54,300.

Small School Policy and the Philadelphia School District:

The School District of Philadelphia has approximately 200,000 students in over 260 public schools. The District is divided into nine regions each under the supervision of a Regional Superintendent. In February 2005, the School District announced that they would create 28 small, college preparatory high schools and nine magnet schools. This initiative is a part of the "Secondary Movement" that was introduced in the 2002-2003 school year. The focus of the Secondary Education Movement was to revamp the standards within all District neighborhood high schools, including mandating college preparatory programs based on the District's standardized core curriculum, reinstating Advanced Placement honors courses, providing SAT and PSAT preparatory training, and establishing advanced specialty academic programs such as the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program in all of the neighborhood high schools.⁸

Youth United For Change, a youth organization that addresses educational and community issues, has taken the lead in advocating for smaller schools for Kensington and Onley high schools. Through their research, community engagement, and support, they brought their concerns and ideas to the table in search of solutions. Their website describes their efforts as:

“Y.U.C is building a broad-based, democratic organization with the power to hold school officials and government accountable to meet the needs of Philadelphia’s youth. Y.U.C believes that every young person deserves a quality education that will enable them to have a variety of options upon graduation whether that be to attend college, further their training, pursue a fulfilling career or obtain a stable job.”

Kensington separating into three schools is a part of the District’s effort to break up the large physical comprehensive high schools into smaller, more focused schools. It is believed and research supports that one of the ways to overcome the educational challenges that many of these schools face is to provide a smaller school setting where teachers and students have more opportunities to interact. Moreover, incorporating a theme at these schools provides students a chance to study a subject, career or, art that serves their interest.

To support organizations such as YUC and community groups interested in Small Schools Policy, the Education Fund has been a convener of the Education First Compact which includes school district staff, community organizations, teachers and union representatives. This group has worked to further develop the small school’s policy for the District.

Concordia School and Community Planning Process

Through the community planning process facilitated by Concordia, school staff, concerned residents, community groups, civic and religious leaders, business owners, parents and students were able to identify the strengths of their community and think of creative ways to support its schools.

Over the past 18 years, Concordia has developed a holistic community development process to promote the comprehensive planning and design of community facilities and programs. This process is based on an approach to community planning that is called the Concordia Model. The Concordia Model approaches communities through six frameworks which are: physical,

cultural, economic, educational, social, and cultural. The process employs various methods of community organizing to engage a significant representative group of community members in a planning and design process. By utilizing a framework that addresses the community’s physical, cultural, social, economic, organizational and educational resources, the planning process encourages joint use of public facilities and other integrated and economical solutions for short and long-term community needs.



III. Process Overview

Initiation of Process by Students

The planning process for the reconfiguration of Kensington High School into four small schools was initiated by students of Youth United for Change in 2002. The first step in this process was to obtain support of the Philadelphia School District CEO Paul Vallas to transform the high school into four small schools. Subsequently, the students conducted a “listening campaign”, requesting input from the student body about what the new schools should be like. In March, 2003, before more than 75 Kensington residents, YUC students presented a plan to Paul Vallas to break Kensington High School up into four small schools.

In 2003, and with the support of Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, students started the research on small school programs with a series of visits to small schools around the country. The purpose of these was to learn about small school programs and gather ideas that could be applied to the new Kensington high schools. The group visited successful small schools in the Bronx, Brooklyn, New York City, and Providence, Rhode Island. At the same time, the students researched and identified possible sites for the fourth school and invited school and community organizations, community members, and representatives to support, learn, and participate in the planning process for the reconfiguration of the schools.

YUC's work culminated in June 2005 in a public action with 250 students, residents, parents and Kensington High School administrators where student members of YUC gained commitments from Chief Academic Officer Dr. Thornton. The commitments included:

“The School District of Philadelphia agrees to support the community design process facilitated by Concordia, LLC for the designs of Kensington and west Philadelphia high schools... and commits to creating a final design that is mutually acceptable to the School District and the community.”

“The School District of Philadelphia is moving forward on the new construction for Kensington High School.”



Following are two reports prepared by students as a part of the research on small schools:

"Hi my name is Terrese Thomas and I attend Kensington Culinary Arts School. I want to talk about what makes a small school successful. Based on our research there are some things that are important to make a small school successful.

1) Parent and community involvement - everyone needs to be more involved with the process of a kid. Parents and teachers on a first name basis can become allies in fostering a student's success. Business and community organizations find it easier for partnerships.

2) Strong personal bonds - students feel a greater sense of engagement, belonging and personal value when their classmates get to know them.

3) Improved teacher working conditions - making the classroom more comfortable will improve lesson planning. Teachers also expressed great satisfaction with being able to influence the structure and direction of the school.

Research also showed that small schools were more successful in cities that had small schools policies and an office of small schools that provided ongoing support. The Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform and the Education First Compact which consists of groups like: Youth United for Change, Philadelphia Education Fund, Philadelphia Student Union, Research for Action, Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project and The William Penn Foundation have developed a policy for small schools in Philadelphia.

Important components of the policy are that small schools need to be community centered. They need good planning time, autonomy for curriculum and governance, site based selection, lump sum budgeting, and should enroll no more than 100 students per grade.

The groups are currently working to get this policy approved by the district. If our small schools at Kensington have objectives like these we will be much better."

Research done around the country on small schools has shown that the following are the barriers to successful small schools:

- 1) Lack of strong personal bonds - one of the purposes of small schools is to build stronger relationships among staff, between students and staff and among students. Most people want schools to be better but not different
- 2) The ionic notions of a school - the public image to what high schools should be is perhaps that greatest barrier to change.
- 3) Small Schools act like large schools - a small school that attempts to remain comprehensive most often ends up looking like a small big school, maintaining many of the design features and culture components that small schools seek to undo. Small schools expert Michelle Fine calls them "Large Schools in drag"
- 4) So called small schools are not small enough - A small school is closer to 200 than 400 students, certainly not 500 to 800 students as often recommended. Schools of more than 400 students tend to work hard to remain comprehensive.
- 5) Educators lack images of small schools - Many teachers and principals attended large schools that worked for them. They perceive the critique of large schools to be personal and respond defensively.
- 6) Lack of time, resources, and technical assistance - Schools need continued support from the district to gain new kinds of knowledge, free up planning time, involve parents and the community, and evaluate progress.

Small schools need to develop their own culture that revolves around hard work, high aspirations, respect for others, and an expectation that all students can succeed.

by Rahdia Robinson

The Work of the Design Teams

The Kensington High School Design Team started meeting in April, 2004. Organizations involved in the Design Team included: Aspira, The Light House, New Kensington CDC, Norris Square Civic Association, and Youth United for Change.

At the Design Team's first meeting, it was unanimously decided that Kensington High School should be broken up into the four autonomous small schools of no more than 400 students each. Subsequently, the Design Team began to focus on finding a location for the new school. Members of the team toured different sites of land in the neighborhood and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each site. The Team concluded that the seven acres located on Palmer and Front streets, the largest contiguous piece of land in the catchment area, was the best location for the fourth Kensington high school that is to include shared sports facilities.

The Design Team agreed that they wanted to plan the new schools through a democratic process. As a result, the planning team was broadened to include parents, community residents, teachers and more community organizations. The William Penn Foundation introduced members of the design team to Concordia. In July 2004, Concordia presented their planning process to the Kensington Community at the Norris Square Child Care Center. This meeting was attended by students, parents, teachers, community organizations and school district officials.

The Concordia Facilitated Planning Process

Concordia's work in Kensington began with a research and organizing phase. This phase involved the gathering of statistical data, existing community development reports, studies of related successful school models, and demographic information about the neighborhood. A Planning Team of community leaders was formed to help guide and assist Concordia in community outreach and organizing efforts.



Concordia and the Planning Team worked together and recruited four local people to be hired and trained as Concordia Fellows. The Fellows were hired to serve as the local leaders who would assist Concordia in facilitating the planning process and to design our outreach strategies to recruit and increase Steering Committee participants. As a result of their efforts, over 300 residents and community stakeholders were identified and invited to participate on the Steering Committee.

The Concordia Fellows also assisted with organizing the community, group facilitation and brought to the process an intimate knowledge about the Kensington community. The Concordia

Fellows received training about the Concordia Model and provided invaluable contributions to the planning process that helped to make this initiative more responsive to the community's needs.

In Kensington, over 140 residents and community stakeholders participated on the Steering Committee, which met once a month over a five month period. This group involved many residents, seniors, parents, community-based organizations and youth who reside, work and/or have a vested interest in the improvement of the Kensington community. Many individuals were recruited to ensure diversity and balance of views, but the meetings were open to the public and anyone could join the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee members were invited to attend all planning meetings and to share their work and progress with those who were not able to participate. Recruitment and outreach was continuous throughout the process.

Steering Committee members were led through a series of small group work sessions and open forums where the discussions explored ideas about successful models of high performing and community centered schools. In large and small groups, participants identified community needs, assets and opportunities. To assist with these small group discussions, two co-facilitators were appointed for each subcommittee. Co-facilitators helped Concordia to create the agendas for each of the Steering Committee meetings. Additionally, throughout the course of the seven meeting process, Steering Committee members shared their vision and hopes for the Kensington High Schools.

Prior to the Steering Committee making its final recommendations, each participant was encouraged to seek community feedback on the ideas and issues that were discussed during the meetings. The Communication Task Force, (CTF) with representation from each of the subcommittees, was charged with obtaining community feedback and sharing with the whole community the progress of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee incorporated the community's feedback and reached consensus on a final set of recommendations and strategies for Philadelphia School District and the Kensington High Schools to adopt. To sustain the community's work in collaboration with the District, a leadership team, the Sustainability Circle, was formed.

IV. Process Vision and Mandate

Acknowledging that the Kensington high schools community planning process is only a first step of an ongoing school-community partnership, members of the Communications Task Force created a number of documents intended to capture the spirit of the process and to serve as an enduring reminder of the intentions of this first planning group, and a roadmap for groups to come.

The Vision Statement for Kensington high schools was created by bringing together the individual ideas of all the Steering Committee members about the future of Kensington high schools. The participants' vision statements for Kensington schools were collected by Communications Task Force members who then crafted the Kensington high school vision from these statements and presented it to the Steering Committee for approval.

Year 2012. A vision for KHS New Facilities, New Attitudes

For the past seven years Kensington High School has been operating as four smaller schools: Culinary Arts, Creative and Performing Arts, International Business, and Urban Studies/ Energy Technology. The change has been dramatic and far-reaching. Kensington High School is a beacon of hope for the students and the community. The whole neighborhood has become involved in the process of education. The schools have new computer labs, state of the art science labs, especially for the Energy Technology School, libraries, recreational facilities for students and the community, space for parents and community, a student-counseling center for guidance and employment information.

Most importantly attitudes have changed. Attendance is high. The dropout rate is low. Teacher turnover is virtually non-existent. The school is also transforming the community. Graduates are returning to work and live in the old neighborhood. Graduates of the Culinary Arts School have opened new restaurants. The arts are flourishing in the community thanks to the CAPA grads, five of whom are nationally known stars! Employment opportunities have grown with the increase in small business started by graduates of the International Business School. These businesses, along with others, provide internships for current students.

Perhaps the most dramatic change has been in the entirely new facility of the 4th school: the School of Urban Studies and Energy Technology. Have you seen the windmills that provide clean, inexpensive, renewable energy for the school? This is part of a program to experiment with alternative and renewable forms of energy. Even more important is the energy of the students. In the School of Urban Studies they have tackled problems of drugs, blight, and insufficient city services and resources. The Energy Tech students have demonstrated a respect for natural resources and the environment. This has led to a school that is clean physically and environmentally.

Who would have dreamed that in seven years Kensington High School would transform this diverse multicultural community? Only those who dream could pull it off. And they have.

The Community Mandate was created by members of the Communications Task Force following the same objective as the Vision for KHS but focusing more on the history and spirit of the planning process itself. The Community Mandate was approved by the Steering Committee at meeting six.

OUR MANDATE

Over the past few years Kensington High School has been labeled as one of the worst high schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Many families did whatever they could to avoid sending their children to Kensington High. Most of the young people who entered as freshmen did not graduate with their class. Those who did graduate were not adequately prepared to continue their education at a four-year college. This had to change. Closing the school was not an option.

Now the change has begun. Kensington High will become four separate smaller entities with, hopefully, a common identity. In order for this transformation to be realized, all stakeholders must be part of, and committed to, the transformation process. This includes: students; parents; faculty and administrators; the City and its agencies; the business community; Churches; community organizations; and residents. We all have a stake in the successful transformation of Kensington High School.

This transformation cannot be limited to the academic environment and educational processes of Kensington High School. It must involve the transformation of the community and beyond. The current conditions of Kensington High and the neighborhood did not develop overnight. They will not be transformed overnight. This process cannot end in December. By then, we will have only begun to fight.

V. Steering Committee Recommendations

The following sections describe the final recommendations approved by the Kensington high schools' Steering Committee and refined by the Sustainability Circle. The recommendations are organized into seven categories: Vision/Outcomes, Course of Study, Student Supports, Facilities, Governance and Scheduling, Partnerships/Collaborations, and Money-Saving Small Schools Strategies. These categories encompass a breath of issues and ideas generated from the subcommittees after studying the cultural, organizational, physical, economic, educational, and social needs and assets of Kensington high schools and their neighborhood.

Vision/Outcomes

The following recommendations refer to the Steering Committee's general vision for Kensington high schools. These recommendations will constitute the basis for the creation of a core set of principles that will guide the development of the schools and at the same time shape their common culture.

1. The Kensington High School campus should consist of four small autonomous schools of no more than 400 students per school and 100 students per grade. The four Kensington high schools should work together to share facilities, resources and programming so that all KHS students will have an opportunity to thrive.
2. Each school should have lump sum budgeting.
3. Each school should have autonomy to design its own curriculum in line with state standards and Schools District requirements.
4. Within each school, academic learning should be built around a theme and integrated across disciplines.
5. All Kensington High School students should graduate with the skills, knowledge, and credits needed to attend a four-year college, and with the work skills to enter employment in a particular industry or field.
6. The fourth school should be Kensington High School for Economic, Legal and Social Justice and it should include the following programs: Economic Development, Legal and Social Justice, Civic Engagement, Urban Studies, Leadership Development, and Environmental Justice.

Governance and Scheduling

This section includes the Steering Committee thoughts on how the four autonomous schools will be managed.

1. The Stakeholder Body described in the Small Schools Policy should collaborate in making all major school decisions including the budget. Each Body will include parents, students, teachers, and staff, community members and the principal. The principals will be selected by the Site Council with recommendations from the School District. A draft of the Small Schools Policy is included in the Appendix.
2. Members of the Stakeholder Body should receive training in school budgeting and financial management.
3. School schedules should be coordinated among the four small schools to facilitate collaborative courses and after school programs.

Course of Study

High academic achievement by every student is among the main goals of an education program. The recommendations grouped under this category relate to the action steps that the Steering Committee considers necessary to enhance the academic performance of Kensington high schools and hence, its students. These recommendations are not limited to the reform of the curriculum; they entail changes in the whole school culture by placing the concepts of academic excellence, community partnerships, hands-on learning, family involvement, and healthy lifestyles at the core of the Kensington high schools educational experience.

1. Service learning should be established within the curricula of the four Kensington schools in a core subject area to promote civic involvement, volunteerism and community pride.
2. Kensington high schools should provide students with work-based and community-based learning experiences in a variety of career options that provide for real world application of academic and work skills. Promote leadership development through internships and mentoring opportunities that utilize local resources. These resources include businesses, community organizations and residents, including seniors and retirees. The internship and mentor program should include character development, values and ethics.
3. Kensington high schools should promote a vision for excellence focused on academic achievement and the pursuit of higher education by providing college preparation, Advanced Placement (AP), and career courses. An International Baccalaureate program should also be considered as a joint effort of the four schools.

4. Kensington high schools should have at least two AP courses per subject area on which students from all four schools would be eligible to participate.
5. Each small school should receive additional funding for at least the first five years, in order to hire additional staff and/or make whatever adjustments are necessary to allow for common planning time for teachers across disciplines.
6. One of the small schools should offer an English-Spanish dual language program. The multicultural character of Kensington's community differentiates it from others and it's considered by its residents as one of the neighborhood's main assets. This characteristic is also reflected in the student population with a high percentage of the students coming from Latino families. Offering dual language programs will enhance the language abilities of students coming from bilingual homes and provide the opportunity to learn spanish to students coming from homes where only english id spoken. Being fluent in two languages will certainly enhance student's possibilities of getting better placements in higher education and in the labor market.
7. Kensington high schools educational programs should be coordinated with college dual enrollment programs for Grades 11 and 12 at all four schools.
8. Within Culinary Arts:
 - A healthy life-styles and food component to the Culinary Arts curriculum should be included. This program would involve collaboration with local community groups to promote health and nutrition.
 - The Culinary Arts school should work with outside accreditation organizations to create a set of courses that lead to a culinary arts certification for students.



Student Support Services

The following recommendations are intended to create a network of services to support the students, their families and the Kensington community. This network will respond to the challenges present in the community as they use community's assets to fulfill some of its needs.

1. Provide community support centers on the Kensington High School campus such as social, physical health, and mental health services. Centers should also serve the community as referral agencies, connecting individuals and families with available resources.
2. Incorporate the "inclusion model" for integrating Special Education students into general education in the four schools. Regular teachers working with special education students should be provided additional professional development time to plan and coordinate with special education teachers.
3. Provide resources for post secondary education planning and financial aid research according to the needs of the student population.
4. There should be a ratio of not less than one advisor per 20 students, at least one of whom should have detailed knowledge of financial resources.
5. Structure an advisory program at every grade level for life planning with the same advisor staying with students throughout their four years of high school.
6. Nurture and support student and family interest in higher education with college fairs, college funding information and resources.
7. Integrate the Library Power model into Kensington high schools. Each school should have a research center including computers and a specialized library encompassing the needs of each particular program. Additionally, there should be a comprehensive library which will be shared by the four schools and the community.
8. Create an education foundation to provide post-secondary scholarships for students and fund program enhancements.

Partnerships/Collaboration

This set of recommendations reflects the Steering Committee's intention to place education at the center of the Kensington community. Research has shown that community involvement in schools not only increases the students' academic achievement but it also increases school safety reducing expenses related to security.

The following recommendations address the creation of resources to enhance community partnerships and associations as well as suggest specific ways in which school resources will be shared with the larger community.

1. Pursue collaborative projects among the four schools to support and promote real-world learning opportunities including school-based enterprises, such as running a catering business supported by both the culinary and business schools, hosting a TV cooking show supported by the CAPA and culinary school, and writing and publishing a cookbook supported by all three of the existing schools.
2. The four high schools and the Sustainability Circle will work to establish community partners for each of the schools.
3. Partner with feeder schools to facilitate 8th and 9th grade transition. Provide high school credits for 8th graders taking high school level courses.
4. Collaborate with the city Recreation Department and community organizations to offer before and after-school services to youth and other community members.
5. Cooperate with the Free Library of Philadelphia to create a regional library as part of the new school or in close proximity to it. Both residents and students should have equal access to the library during all of the hours that it is open.
6. The library should have the holdings, Internet access, and professional librarian assistance necessary for students and parents to research internships, careers, and colleges.

Money-saving Small School Strategies

During Meeting #6, the Concordia Fellows presented five different small schools models to the Steering Committee members. The case studies were selected from compilations of best practices at small schools, namely, *Dollars and Sense II* and *Schools and Centers of Community: A Design Guide*. All the schools presented as case studies are high schools and are either located in urban areas or serve urban student populations. Copies of these documents are available from Concordia upon request.

Steering Committee members were organized in five small groups that rotated through the five different presentations. At each one of the “stations” the participants listened to a general description of a small school model including particular characteristics of each school. The group decided to place a special emphasis on the strategies that made these small schools cost-effective.

After the presentation, the participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each model and strategy and their applicability to the Kensington high schools. The participants also shared strategies that were not part of the presentations but they thought were important. Finally, they prioritized the strategies. A detailed description of the prioritized strategies is included in the Appendix.

Information about each of the case studies can be found in the bibliography and the KnowledgeWorks Foundation website.

Facilities

The following set of recommendations relates to Kensington high schools’ buildings. At the center of these recommendations is the idea that the four Kensington high schools should offer their students state-of-the-art facilities with sufficient and adequate spaces to support and enhance their learning experience.

Some of these recommendations are common to the four schools while some belong to a particular program. At the request of the Sustainability Circle, the principals of the existing three schools and their staff prepared comprehensive lists of facility needs for their programs, including a list of spaces that could potentially be shared by the four schools and with the community. In the case of the Culinary Arts Schools, a preliminary list of needs was created by teachers and school staff participating in a Design Charette, and completed by the principal. Due to the richness and extension of these documents they are included in the Appendix.

The facility needs of Kensington High School for Economic, Legal and Social Justice will be determined by the Sustainability Circle working jointly with the School District. This process will constitute the next stage of the planning process.

Facility Recommendations follow:

1. The developer should work with the Sustainability Circle while designing and building the school.
2. The contract with the developer should provide that the developer will cooperate with the School District and the Sustainability Circle to encourage substantial use of local and minority construction firms, laborers, and providers of materials.

3. The new building should be designed for CAPA School and house the shared sports facilities. This would more easily allow for the creation of the spaces mentioned above as well as any special design features needed to accommodate sharing of such spaces with the community.
4. Design and reconfigure schools to create greater physical connections and interactions with the surrounding communities. Each school should contribute to beautifying the community with efforts such as flower barrels, trash cans with anti-litter art, and other public art.
5. Design state-of-the-art academic and recreational facilities that will serve both educational and community needs, including the following:
 - a. Auditorium, performance, and exhibit space for performing arts— Both schools and community groups would use these spaces.
 - b. Science labs— Provide science labs that are used exclusively for science purposes.
 - c. Computer facilities—Make the schools wireless centers for the students and other community residents.
 - d. Culinary Arts— Expand the physical space of this school; create a library with special culinary holdings and use more technology that enhances teaching about culinary arts.
 - e. Recreation—Provide high-quality recreational facilities such as swimming pool, weight room, rooftop or indoor track, football/soccer field, and gym space.
6. Think Green! Use alternative energy approaches such as large windows for light, a rooftop garden to cut down rain runoff to the city sewer system, recycled building materials, and other eco-design concepts.
7. Create a state-of-the art parent/community area at each school site that encourages parents and other community residents to be a part of the school and supports multiculturalism and intercultural connections. This should be a welcoming, open space that provides privacy for parent/teacher conferences, computer and Internet access, and a kitchenette.

VI. School Themes

At Planning Meeting #6, the Steering Committee participants focused on creating the specific recommendations for each school which are included in Section V. In the case of the fourth school, the group focused on creating a recommendation for the school's theme. The idea that the school's theme should relate to urban issues and justice was unanimous among participants. The discussion was focused on deciding on a name that captured the specific issues on which the school should focus. Peace, justice, human relations in urban environments, community organizing, leadership and sustainable "green" design were some of the proposed ideas. After a long discussion the following theme was proposed for the fourth Kensington high school: Kensington High School of Civic Engagement, Urban Studies, Leadership Development and Environmental Justice Academy. This theme was presented to the Steering Committee at the end of Meeting #6.

At a meeting held on January 18, the Sustainability Circle decided to refine and simplify the name of the new school to be included in the recommendations. After much discussion the group agreed to name the school Kensington High School for Economic, Legal and Social Justice.

VII. School Sites

At Planning Meetings #1, 2, and 3 the Physical Subcommittee focused on creating recommendations for the location of the fourth Kensington small school. Proximity between the school and the current school population, proximity to the existing Kensington high schools, and accessibility were considered as parameters to evaluate the different options.

Two possibilities were recommended as viable options. Listed in order of preference:

- Seven acre site located on Front and Palmer streets
- Two-block site bounded by Diamond, Amber, Abigail, Dreer, Susquehanna streets, which include the “bottle” building

An additional site located at American Street and Susquehanna was added to the previous selection by request of community members.

Basic information about the three proposed sites was assembled by Concordia in an information packet. The information included location, site area, aerial picture, photographs, and a GIS map showing proximity of the site to community assets.

These packets of information were distributed to the members of the Steering Committee for their review. In a large group setting, the participants were asked to think of the advantages, disadvantages, and opportunities of each one of the sites and assign them priorities (first, second or third option).

After discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the different options, the group decided to recommend various sites: the seven acre site was proposed as the first option for the location of the fourth Kensington high school building, the site surrounded by N. Diamond, Abigail, Dreer, and Susquehanna was recommended as a site to hold support activities for the high school; for example, a public library that would be open after school hours. The site located on American St., and Susquehanna was recommended as a support site for the school as well and would become the playfield for the school's future football team.

This proposal was supported by the vast majority the participants becoming the site recommendation to be included in this report.

The information packet including information on the proposed sites is included in the Appendix.
Prioritized sites

1. - Site #1 – Front & Palmer Streets
2. - Site #2 – N. Diamond, Abigail, Dreer, and Susquehanna
3. - Site #3 – N. American Street and Susquehanna

VIII. School Configuration: the Results of the Design Charette

Over a period of three hours, a group of educators, administrators, students, and community representatives participated in a creative design charette. The purpose of the charette was to create different possible layouts for the proposed fourth Kensington high school and for the current school building, which will be broken into two schools. Participants were divided into six equally-sized mixed groups; each group contained one or more educator, administrator, student, and community representative.

Before beginning the charette activity, each group reviewed the spaces with which they were to be working, the activity guidelines proposed by the School District, and the site recommendations made by the community. In preparation for this activity, Concordia created to-scale “game pieces” and “game boards” which represented all spaces allocated to the project by the District. (For example, if the District established that the new facility required three 800sf special education labs, Concordia, LLC printed out three 800sf rectangles representing the labs at a scale of 1/8" = 1'-0".) Each of the six groups received a site plan, and all spaces necessary to create the entire school facility.

The plan layout activity consisted of an introduction, formation of six groups, and a 90-minute activity. Each group achieved the goal of laying out a school facility through a process of consensus. Some groups achieved this goal by dividing the various tasks and conquering the facility, while other groups achieved the goal by creating a collective strategy and collectively implementing their plan. Though Concordia facilitated the activity, Concordia played no role in the creation of the various plan layouts. After completion of the charette, each group identified a spokesperson who presented their group’s plan layout scenario to all participants. Each presentation led to discussion which explored the possibilities identified by the particular scenario.

Each group, in their layout activity, addressed room quantities and relationships. Various school layouts were created, and many important aspects of site layout were identified and explored. School configurations focused a great deal of attention on the relationship between common/shared spaces and learning environments. Many groups identified specific locations for Career and Technical Education (CTE) space. Overall school access, receiving, and security were addressed by all six groups.

IX. Next Steps and Sustainability

The Role of the Sustainability Circle

The Sustainability Circle is the group of process leaders who will oversee the implementation of the Steering Committee's recommendations and encourage ongoing community efforts as an outgrowth of the planning process. This group is made up of Communications Task Force members, Subcommittee Co-facilitators, and other volunteers.

The responsibilities of the Sustainability Circle include:

- Representing the Planning Project through presentations, meeting attendance, and other public forums for distributing the Steering Committee's recommendations.
- Determining and executing the most advantageous group organization to accomplish their goals.
- Reassembling the Steering Committee as needed after the project's completion.
- Championing the work of the Steering Committee in the community.
- Creating and implementing a work plan for sustainability.

After Meeting #5, Concordia started working with the Kensington Sustainability Circle to develop a work plan to finalize the Steering Committee's recommendations and oversee their implementation. The group scheduled a presentation of the planning process' Final Report to School District's authorities for January 23rd, 2006.

After this presentation, The Sustainability Circle will continue to meet on a regular basis to oversee the implementation of the recommendations. The Sustainability Circle will also be in charge of building partnerships with neighborhood, city and national organizations and institutions to support Kensington high schools and the Kensington community.

The Sustainability Circle will also represent the Steering Committee participating in the programming, final design, and construction stages of the fourth Kensington small school. The Sustainability Circle will create a communication plan to update the community on the progress of implementation, incorporate its suggestions, and learn about the concerns of the larger Kensington high schools community as the process moves forward.

X. Appendix

- A. Community Profile
- B. Small Schools Policy
- C. Meeting Descriptions
- D. Kensington CAPA and International Business School Recommendations
- E. Planning Process Documents
 - i. Meeting Agendas
 - ii. AAR reports
 - iii. Site Information Package
 - iv. Money-Saving Small Schools Strategies
 - v. Layouts Created at the Design Charette
 - vi. Dollars & Sense II. Available upon request
 - vii. Schools as Centers of the Community. Available upon request
- F. Kensington Community Maps
 - i. KHS Campus, Map, and Aerial View
 - ii. Kensington Community Assets by Concordia Framework
- G. Steering Committee Members
- H. Press

Footnotes

¹ Pennsylvania Department of Education's website

² See Research For Action's website for the complete report:

<http://www.researchforaction.org/PSR/PublishedWorks/AYPPhilaSchools04.pdf>

³ Taken from Standard & Poor's website: www.schoolmatters.com

⁴ Taken from the School District of Philadelphia's website. For more information about the PSSA, please refer to the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website:

[http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/site/default.asp?g=0&a_and_tNav=\[630\]&k12Nav=\[1141\]](http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/site/default.asp?g=0&a_and_tNav=[630]&k12Nav=[1141])

⁵ Taken from Standard & Poor's website: www.schoolmatters.com

⁶ Philadelphia Public School Notebook, Fall 2005, Volume 13, No. 1

⁷ See Student Distribution included in the Appendix.

⁸ Taken from the School District of Philadelphia's website: Newsrelease