

PINE-RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

TRANSFORMATION BLUEPRINT

In preparation for the opening of the
Eden Hall Upper Elementary School
in August 2008



Personalized Rigorous Student Development

Pine-Richland School District
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Preface

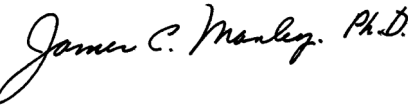
The Pine-Richland School District will be realigning its current building grade structure in August 2008. With the opening of a new state-of-the art upper elementary school (grades 4-5-6), the current elementary schools will house students in grades K-3 and the secondary campus will have a middle school building with grades 7 and 8 with the high school remaining a 9-12 facility. Along with this physical transformation of the buildings, Pine-Richland will undergo an academic transformation to realize its vision as a recognized leader in education. The goal is to transform the Pine-Richland School District to give its graduates a sustained competitive advantage in our global society.

The transformation process has been ongoing in the school district since the opening of Pine-Richland High School in 1992. Since that time the student enrollment has increased by more than 2100 students (from 2300 to 4443 in 2007-08) and all district buildings were renovated to accommodate this student growth. As a result, the Pine-Richland School district is noted for having first-rate school facilities and enjoys a strong academic reputation. We are now ready to reach for even higher levels of excellence.

Jim Collins in his book *Good to Great* shows how good organizations can make the leap to great results that are sustained over time. Although the Pine-Richland School District is considered a high performing school district and its reputation as a quality school district is increasing annually, district leaders are not content with maintaining the status quo. If better is possible, being good is not enough. Therefore, this transformational blueprint identifies strategies to help Pine-Richland students reach new heights in student achievement.

With the opening of the new upper elementary school there is a sense of urgency to move from the planning stage in program improvements to the implementation stage. John P. Kotter, noted author and Harvard professor, suggests in his book *Leading Change* that establishing a sense of urgency is critical in gaining needed cooperation. With complacency high, transformation usually goes nowhere. (Kotter, *Leading Change* p.36). The strategies identified in the blueprint document have been in the discussion stage for the past two years with many of the strategies already in place. The deadline date is August 2008 as this date heightens interest for change and amplifies emotions as the new school gets closer to completion.

In the 2007-2008 school year, the district celebrates its 50th anniversary, the last year of its current school building grade configuration. This is a wonderful time to be a member of the Pine-Richland school community. The transformation process is a challenging and an uplifting experience for everyone in the school district. Pine-Richland will continue to be a place where parents want to send their children and where their children want to be.

Sincerely,

James C. Manley, Ph.D.
Superintendent

“If better is possible; being good is not enough.”

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IV. SUMMARY

As the district prepares to celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2008 and reassigns the fourth, fifth and sixth grade students to the new state-of-the-art upper elementary school in the fall of 2008, this transformational blueprint will serve as a guide to ensure a personalized learning environment for children as they are engaged in an academically rigorous mastery of high standards. As the building grade configuration is transformed so will the district’s academic program.

The blueprint is not a one-shot attempt to increase the performance of Pine-Richland graduates over a short period of time; rather the intent of the blueprint is to build lasting success that is sustainable over time. It is imperative that Pine-Richland graduates are college ready and are able to compete at the college level and in life. There is no second chance to make it right.

The success in carrying out the strategies identified in the blueprint will be contingent upon the collaborations and collective wisdom of the staff and school community. Likewise, change requires that sufficient opportunities are provided for faculty and staff professional development programs as students experience differentiated learning. Faculty and staff will be at different levels of skill and knowledge with respect to the key elements of the Blueprint and will require a differentiated model of professional development. Change is inevitable in education and this transformation blueprint identifies the strategies for continuous improvement in the Pine-Richland School District. The goal of the blueprint is to attain even higher levels of excellence than what currently exists and for the district to become a recognized leader in education.

In summary the Transformation Blueprint focuses on personalizing the learning environment by:

- ❖ promoting and creating family and community models that gives each student and parent an extra-ordinary sense of belonging and being connected to the school and district.
- ❖ piloting a mentoring model for high school students building career and learning pathways.
- ❖ using an inclusive approach where the lines between regular and special education are transparent.

And implementing an academically rigorous program by:

- ❖ creating a curriculum that is creative and rigorous
- ❖ using instructional practices that promote high expectations for all.
- ❖ using external measurers to determine success.



PRSD TRANSFORMATION BLUEPRINT FOR
PERSONALIZED RIGOROUS STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

I. INTRODUCTION – A CALL FOR TRANSFORMATION



Businesses constantly focus on ways to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. The book *Competitive Advantage* by Michael E. Porter is a landmark book that describes how a firm actually gains an advantage over its rivals. In today’s 21st century, competition is international, and companies cannot be satisfied with the status quo; they must continue to investigate and innovate. According to Porter, the competitive position of a firm can be shaped based on its choice of competitive strategies, which is a challenging and exciting process. Competitive strategies have considerable power to make an industry more or less attractive (Porter, *Competitive Advantage*, p.2).

The same is true for educational organizations. Graduates now face global competition for jobs. People from India, China, Russia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Central Asia have entered the playing field (Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat*). The 21st century challenge compels schools to shape a new future. Doing things the way we have always done them will not suffice anymore in education as well as in the business world.

The Pine-Richland School District is embarking upon the most important time in its 50-year history. The year 2008 will be significant in accelerating change. The school district is in a unique position to transform Pine-Richland into one of the top tier districts in the country. As we live in a global economy that drives the future, we must prepare our students to compete for the dwindling job opportunities that will be available to them. This is a quality of life issue where academic rigor is a must for all students. Ensuring that Pine-Richland students cultivate a sustained competitive advantage for their future lives demands that the school district implement a transformation blueprint. Pine-Richland School District will offer personalized rigorous student development through the strategies identified in this blueprint.

“Globalization is the central feature of our times.”

II. A BLUEPRINT FOR PERSONALIZED LEARNING

The school district’s vision is to provide students with customized learning. This implies that options will be available for students at Pine-Richland. Ideally, customization means that each and every child will experience a personalized education. As educators, we are challenged to provide students with several ways to achieve our high expectations. The goal is to help students discover their strengths and passions by providing them with opportunities to customize their educational experience.

This blueprint emphasizes the 3 P’s of Excellence – People, Places and Programs. Establishing a personalized learning environment requires People who care and give an extraordinary effort in establishing a welcoming and students first climate; Places that are well kept, clean and safe; and Programs that are rigorous and intellectually stimulating. Personalized learning means that students experience caring adults who interact with them in ways that support their developmental growth and interests. It implies that teachers and other adults in the school will challenge the students to stretch as far as they intellectually are able to do so.

The principles described in Joseph A. Michelli’s book *The Starbuck Experience* (2007) and *Transforming A College [Elon]* by George Keller is referenced for this initiative. The *Starbuck Experience* requires all staff to be welcoming, genuine, knowledgeable, considerate and involved. At Elon University every e-mail, every call, every letter is handled promptly and politely. Elon’s campus and buildings are strikingly beautiful and pristine. Elon has no deferred maintenance – none. (Keller, *Transforming A College*, p.2). Elon believes in the quality everywhere approach. Susan Klopman, Vice president and Director of Admissions reviewed this approach and the “student first belief” in her visit to Pine-Richland in September 2007. Strategies for personalizing the learning environment are described in this section.

A. Promote a Family Model in the Primary Schools

The new primary schools will use the family model to build curious, capable and confident learners. A strong family orientation program will allow adults and children to get to know each other over time. As a result, parents will grow to know more fully the child’s academic development. Creating joyful, avid learners is the goal. Parents will be partners meaning they will be welcomed and involved. Partnering will be embedded into the culture at the primary schools where parents and other partners feel a genuine sense of belonging. The primary curriculum will be rich in literacy, numeracy and conversation and infused with the arts. Face-to-face interaction will be the preferred mode. We believe that active bodies develop active minds. Learning through physical activity will be promoted. Visual and performing arts teachers, physical education teachers and classroom support personnel will work together to promote student success. Investigations and dialogue will be initiated by expanding the world language program to the primary schools. Also, strategies will be discussed for involving kindergarten students into structured art and physical education experiences.

By transferring the fourth and fifth grade students to the new upper elementary school, the primary schools will have approximately 200 fewer students and more space for programs. The modular classrooms will no longer be needed at Hance and Wexford. Students and staff will have more “breathing room” and this should reduce any stress or tension due to over-crowded conditions.

“Caring people; well kept places; rigorous programs.”

3. Benchmark Student Achievement Data at the Local, State and National Level

In order for the Pine-Richland School District to realize its vision as a respected leader in education, it is imperative that the district establish benchmarks comparing its student success data with other top school districts in the region, state and nation. Currently, the district participates in SchoolMatch compare program which identifies ten school systems in the United States that are most similar to the Pine-Richland School District, based on education level of adults, family income level and poverty rates. Informal contact is made annually with these districts to compare success data and stories.

The blueprint suggests that the comparison be extended to the top five school districts in the region as defined by the *Pittsburgh Business Times* and the top ten districts in Pennsylvania as identified by this same publication. In terms of national ranking, SchoolMatch will be asked to identify the top ten districts in the country for similar comparisons.

A focus for comparative analysis will be such data sources as: standardized tests; state proficiency exams; SAT and ACT scores; number of National Merit finalists and Commended Students; percent of graduates accepted into most competitive and highly competitive colleges as defined by the profiles of American colleges; number of students taking Advanced Placement courses and the AP exam compared to the number of graduating seniors (challenge index).

The data will be analyzed in the district’s annual balanced scorecard report to determine if indeed the district has arrived among the top tier school districts in the country.



C. Analyze External Measures of Success

1. Engage Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) for Professional Coaching in the Transformation Process

The district has entered into a partnership with the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) to enhance the quality of student achievement and professional development in the school district. Through the establishment of a collaborative



leadership team consisting of the superintendent, principals and lead teachers, the focus is on observing and identifying academically rigorous lessons and assignments that can be replicated by staff and used as examples in professional development activities. The Colleague in Residence” provided through ELI will assist the leadership team in the full implementation of the transformational blueprint. Dr. Joseph Werlinich, recognized leader in education and professor at the University of Pittsburgh is

assigned to assist the district in this regard. Regular ELI meetings will be held to plan for walkthroughs and identify look fors in personalized learning on academic rigor. Teacher leaders involved in ELI are viewed as valuable resources in moving the Blueprint agenda forward. Various consultants are available through ELI to assist the ELI learning community in focusing on personalized learning and academic rigor.

2. Indicators of Blueprint Success

In order to determine the success in implementing this blueprint, indicators of success will be developed to assist in evaluating the degree of implementation for personalized learning and academic rigor. For example, the Educational Leadership Initiative team will identify “look fors” that can be recorded via walkthrough observations that document academically rigorous strategies used in the classrooms. Focus groups of parents and students will be formed to determine how well we are doing in implementing the Blueprint agenda.

“Eli promotes a professional learning community that fosters increased understanding and teamwork to make the Blueprint become a reality.”

B. Build a Community Model in the Upper Elementary School

The focus in designing the new upper elementary school was the creation of a personalized learning environment. The school will use the community model to organize instruction. The two academic wings will be viewed as neighborhoods. A floor in each wing is a neighborhood where fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students will be assigned. Therefore, the school will have four similar neighborhoods each containing fourth, fifth and sixth grades to ensure that student learning will occur for the upper elementary school of 1200 students.



Eden Hall Upper Elementary School opening in August 2008

“Creating a large school with a small school appeal.”

1. Team for Student Success

At the upper elementary school, four teachers will work in close proximity to each other to form a house. Within this house, teachers work in teams of two. These two teachers will work together with the same group of students. There will be a total of 12 houses in each of the four neighborhoods. Collaborative Teaming is one of the six principles described by Alan Blankstein in his book *Failure Is Not An Option*. Central to the success of high achieving schools is collaborative teaming focused on teaching and learning (Blankstein, *Failure Is Not An Option*, p.127). Using two teachers to form a house will provide a transition from the primary schools one-teacher approach to the use of separate teachers for different subjects at the secondary level. Students will be able to physically identify their house in the neighborhood. Alternating colors of the exterior brick (white and burgundy) and flat or peaked roofs will help students know exactly where they spend most of their day in the school (community). The use of the community model gives the large upper elementary school a small school appeal.

“A large upper elementary school with a small school appeal.”

2. Incorporate Collaborative Space

Another key feature of the upper elementary school is the use of collaborative space for houses to interact and participate in collaborative assignments. A recent research report by the International Facility Management Association reports that the use of collaborative space in the workplace is growing by 17% since 2002. The collaborative space is located in the commons area for two houses (four classrooms). Students will use this extended area for customized assignments and for flexible group work. Collaborative space encourages teaming for both students and staff and provides a place to share knowledge and skills. This is an excellent space for children to participate in resolving complex problems requiring intelligent small group discussions. The collaborative space is in full view for all four classroom teachers.

3. Transfer Sixth Grade to an Upper Elementary Setting

By moving sixth grade to the upper elementary school, students will have one more year of an elementary setting before they enter the secondary schools in seventh grade. Researchers at Duke and the University of California at Berkeley published a new study indicating that sixth graders attending middle school were more than twice as likely to be disciplined as those attending elementary schools and sixth graders improved their scores on end-of-grade exams in math and reading relative to their peers in middle school. (*Grab Your Sons and Your Daughters*, Duke Magazine, Gazette: Research Frontiers, May-June 2007).

C. Fully Inform Parents as Partners

The blueprint encourages the expansion of e-newsletters called the *Friday Flash* to all primary schools and the upper elementary school. The *Friday Flash* is a weekly tidbit of information on school happenings which is e-mailed to parents, teachers, central office administrators and Board members on Fridays. This excellent communications vehicle will be expanded to the upper elementary school in 2008. Other e-newsletters will be considered for the middle school and high school. Also, the district recently purchased Connect-Ed, which notifies parents instantaneously of an emergency situation or other highly important information relative to the safety and welfare of students. The blueprint calls for exceeding parent expectations for being well informed about their schools and feeling confident that they will be contacted if necessary. "The research is abundantly clear. Nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and families – communities working together in partnership . . . These forms of involvement do not happen by accident or even by invitation. They happen by explicit strategic intervention." – Michael Fullan (1997)



"Sixth graders in an elementary setting tend to behave and learn better."

4. Integrate Technology to Create Interest and Depth in a Lesson



workers were trained for manufacturing jobs. Charles Schwahn, author of the best selling book *Total Leaders* and a highly regarded consultant on leadership, urges leaders to vision an information age learning organization and to move from our present industrial age delivery of instruction to a future-focused information age instructional delivery system. The classrooms in the industrial age were structured for the GI Generation and were based on mass customization. Classrooms are now filled with millennials who embrace technology and are very comfortable in using technology. Therefore, the millennial generation is in need of stimulation and flexibility to use technology as a vital tool in gaining knowledge and customization in daily classroom lessons.

Pine-Richland has made significant strides in integrating technology in the classroom as part of the Classroom for the Future state grant. Over the next two years, the blueprint suggests that the Classroom for the Future concept, which is information age delivery of education, be expanded throughout the district. The instructional delivery system in most schools today is based on the industrial age where



With the opening of the new upper elementary school and with special technology grants awarded to the school district, all core academic classrooms grades 4 through 12 will have Promethean interactive boards to engage learners in a lesson and lap top computers that are readily available to students in the regular classroom. As a result, Pine-Richland students will be among the most engaged learners in the country. Extensive professional programs in technology will be provided to teachers with the goal of having all teachers meet specified technology standards for instruction and be trained in using Blackboard software.

"Pine-Richland students will be among the most engaged learners in the country."

Classroom grouping strategies are used by elementary teachers who teach reading in the individual classrooms. The goal of the transformation blueprint is to make sure that this grouping occurs in every elementary classroom. The blueprint challenges elementary teachers to establish a clear and consistent vision on the highly effective literacy classroom. Flexible grouping for language arts extends knowledge and provides appropriate levels of challenge. Also, it allows for in-depth teacher-directed instruction. The blueprint suggests that professional development opportunities focus on flexible grouping strategies including gender grouping at the elementary level. Boys and girls learn differently and these differences should be known and addressed in the flexible grouping model. Leonard Sax, noted author of *Why Gender Matters* is consulting with the district to increase knowledge on this topic.



Out-of-grade acceleration is an ideal way to challenge highly talented students. The new grade configuration will ease the assignment of certain students for an out-of-grade experience. Primary schools will be structured in family groupings that will allow for informal “looping.” Teachers will



have easy access to colleagues in other grade levels for assistance in accelerating or supporting students' varied academic needs. Teachers will get to know a small group of students over time. For example, each academic neighborhood at the upper elementary school will accommodate 4th, 5th and 6th grade classrooms. Therefore students will be in close proximity to the next grade. Logistics will be planned to provide out-of-grade acceleration for sixth grade students at the middle school.

At the secondary campus, talented middle school students can walk to the high school to take high school courses. High school students can take a college credit course at the high school or via e-learning. Highly talented high school students will be given the opportunity to graduate early to get a head start on college if they meet specific criteria and plan accordingly.

“Flexible grouping provides appropriate levels of challenges.”

D. Pilot a Mentoring Model for Secondary Students

In order to offer an enhanced personalized dimension to Pine-Richland's secondary students, advisers/mentors will truly invest in the lives of our young people. Such an effort advocates and strongly supports the commitment to the personalization and customization of a child's career or collegiate pathway. Beginning with the second semester in 2008, a pilot a mentoring program will be initiated with a select group of high school students, through Project 720, a state high school reform grant progress. The pilot will include volunteer mentors representing high performance careers.



The National Academy of Sciences (NAS), The National Academy of Engineering (NAE), and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) convey in their book *Adviser, Teacher, Role Model, Friend* (On Being a Mentor to Students in Science and Engineering) and research studies at <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/mentor> state, “Often students will not know what questions to ask, what information they need, or what their options are (especially when applying to college or for advanced learning opportunities). A good mentor, who is familiar with the learning requirements in a high performance career, can lessen such confusion by getting to know students and being familiar with the kinds of suggestions and information that can be useful.” The pilot mentoring project will seek out interested and qualified community members who are interested in helping high school students understand the demands and requirements of their chosen field of work. The Project 720 coordinator will develop specific guidelines and criteria for the recruitment, screening, selection, training and involvement of these mentors at the high school. Connecting students with mentors and personalities will help to motivate and advance Pine-Richland students in their educational and personal growth.

“A mentor takes a special interest in the academic success and personal growth of a student.”

E. Explore Career and Learning Pathways in Secondary Schools



During the middle school years, students will be introduced to a wide variety of career possibilities and begin to understand how their strengths and interests map to careers. Eighth graders will become high school ready by having the opportunity to take electives. High school students will experience e-learning courses, job shadowing and internships. Mentoring “shop” talks will be held to connect students to real career experiences. Students who are interested in teaching will be invited to attend professional development seminars held in the district. There will be increased support for rigorous academics and for matriculation to colleges.

1. Transition Middle School Students to the High School



The middle school enrollment will decrease by approximately 350 students in the fall of 2008 with the transfer of sixth grade students to the upper elementary school. Approximately 720 students will attend the middle school for grades seven and eight. There will no longer be a need for modular classrooms to accommodate the large number of students at the middle school. The goal is to make sure that every student is known by and connected to the staff. Seventh grade will use the team concept where teachers from the core disciplines are assigned a team of students and collaborate from a cross-curricular perspective. This concept promotes small personalized structures for learning and enhances connections between teachers and students. Eighth grade will serve as a preparation for high school where students can take electives and high school courses. This will give students an opportunity to get a head start on high school. The district’s strategic plan emphasizes that all students will reach proficiency on the PSSA tests in eighth grade.



“Eighth graders will become high school ready by having the opportunity to take electives.”

1. Establish High Standards for All

All students will be appropriately challenged. There will be no watering down of content. High standards and expectations will be set for all students to master. Differentiation of instruction will be emphasized. The differentiation model that Pine-Richland will follow comes from the Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary. The focus is differentiating down and not up. The classroom teacher establishes high standards and modifies instructional strategies for those students not achieving the standards. The College of William and Mary differentiation model features five characteristics of an academic rigorous lesson. These features include: Acceleration (clustered for higher order thinking skills); Complexity (required multiple resources); Depth (develop a product); Challenge (sophisticated content used); and Creativity (emphasize oral and written communications to real world audience). The district will continue to work closely with Dr. Elissa Brown, formerly with the College of William and Mary Gifted Center and now a consultant with the North Carolina Department of Education. Dr. Brown’s focus will be on assisting the district in identifying academically rigorous practices.

“The goal is to have high standards for all.”

2. Emphasize Real Life Writing and Speaking Experiences

One of the significant vertical articulation goals for Pre-AP and AP teachers is to prepare students to write as they will be required to do in college. The blueprint suggests that all students participate in classroom strategies that improve their proficiency in essay writing.

Writing will continue to be emphasized at the primary and upper elementary schools. Dr. Doug Reeves, a leading authority on standards, assessment and accountability, states that as emphasis on non-fiction writing grows, student achievement improves. A district rubric will be used to compare student writing skills from the beginning of the school year to the end. The purpose of placing writing specifically in the blueprint is to make certain all students are able to write and speak well.

3. Expand Flexible Grouping and Out-of-Grade Acceleration

Flexible grouping in math for grades four and five has proven to be a successful strategy to increase math achievement. Mathematically talented students are identified by the results of pre-tests and the gifted teacher joins the grade level teachers to assist with the acceleration of these talented students. Small learning environments are structured by using the gifted teacher, allowing the groups to be flexible and fluid.

“The goal is to have high standards for all.”

5. Build 21st Century Skills

The framework for 21st century learning begins with core subjects and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which mandates that all students be proficient in English, math, science and social studies. The content of our core subjects in the 21st century includes global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; and health and wellness awareness.

In addition to 21st century content and core subjects are thinking and learning skills that our students must master so that they can keep learning and make good use of what they know throughout their lives. These thinking and learning skills include: critical thinking and problem solving skills, communication skills, creativity and innovation skills, collaboration skills, information and media literacy skills, and contextual learning skills.

Finally, information and communications technology literacy allows students to use 21st century technology in support of 21st century learning. Ultimately all our students must master essential life skills in order to lead successful lives both in and out of school. The emphasis is on social stewardship where students understand that meaning and happiness can be derived by putting “others” over “self” and to provide services to others in need. Opportunities will continue to exist where students are able to give back via services to their school, community and world. These skills include ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people skills, self-direction, positive attitude and social responsibility. These are often referred to as “soft skills” which are essential for future success.

The global connection will be critical for the future success of Pine-Richland Students. Effort will be required to connect Pine-Richland students with individuals from all over the world. This blueprint suggests the formation of a learning community to study the feasibility of offering a world language program to students below sixth grade. Also, the district will support the plan to form an A.W. Beattie International Studies program (ISP) to provide high quality foreign language including Mandarin Chinese and culture to our students.

B. Use Effective Instructional Practices

Our instructional practices will promote high expectations and high support. Flexible grouping will allow and encourage students to progress at their own pace. Writing and speaking will continue to be important across all core subjects. Teachers will use 21st century technologies to enhance instruction. In 2008-09 the school district will lengthen the instructional day by 15 minutes and add additional school days to total 186 days, which is among the highest number of days in Pennsylvania. The challenge will be to use this additional time wisely by focusing on the following instructional strategies.

“Preparing students to write as they are expected to in college is a goal of the blueprint.”

2. Develop College Readiness and Career Understanding

A focus for our middle school students will be an exploration of the connections between classroom and career. A total of 94 percent of Pine-Richland seniors graduate and then attend four-year or two-year institutions but it should be recognized that post-secondary education is not best for every student. The district was awarded a Project 720 grant for 2007-08 to assist with this initiative. Opportunities will be given to middle school students to begin connecting with careers and college options through mapping their classroom plans from middle school through the high school years and into their choice of post graduation plans, choices and personalizing their PR experience. Scheduling will be flexible allowing for students to change their interests or career/college goals. A goal of the blueprint is to provide the necessary career and college information to students and parents so that students are accepted into the college of their choice and complete college within a four-year period. Currently, less than one-third of college students graduate from college on time. This is an added expense (\$25,000 to \$40,000 per year) for the parents and student. “By 2010, two-thirds of all new jobs created will require at least some post secondary education.” (From Governor’s Commission on College and Career Success, 2006). “The academic distinctions that had once been made between students going to college and those planning to go directly into the labor market are no longer useful.” Pathways to College Network suggests that 80 percent of today’s fastest growing jobs require some postsecondary education. Therefore, all students, regardless of their disability or status, need to complete an academically rigorous high school curriculum in order to be well equipped for a productive life and civic life.



To expand the student’s learning outside of school, the senior graduation project will be revised. The revised senior project will focus on giving students options to develop portfolios in their choice of five categories:

Career-College Readiness
Service Projects
Leadership Initiatives
Extended Learning
Global Connections (travel and or study in other countries).

The Senior Project will now be referred to as the “*Pine-Richland Experience*.”

“Less than one-third of college students graduate from college in four years.”

3. Customize the Transition for seniors



Customized learning will personalize programs at the high school. Students will be given opportunities to take e-learning courses to expand course selection options or to free time on their traditional schedules for telescoping (e.g., two math courses in the same year). Also, opportunities will be available for students to take college courses under dual enrollment programs. Job shadowing and internships will be developed to give seniors a real life experience in possible careers of their choice. Connecting academic work to real job experiences will make learning relevant to quality of life issues. The senior year will be viewed as a transition year to college. Opportunities will be made available for seniors to experience large group instruction as a preparation for college style instructional delivery. The blueprint suggests that many jobs that our next generation of adults will experience do not yet exist. Gary Marx, as part of his *Sixteen Trends*, identifies a trend (no. 9) that pressure will grow for society to prepare for jobs and careers that may not currently exist (Gary Marx, *Sixteen Trends*, p.48). Bill Daggett, noted author, consultant and Director for the International Center for Leadership in Education indicates that the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that today's learners will have 10-14 jobs by the age of 38! Therefore we are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist using technologies that have not been invented in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet. We must make certain that the skills we are teaching and information we are disseminating to students are transferable to what may happen to the work force in the future. In light of this information, the Pine-Richland School District will continue to support the A. W. Beattie Career Center in the future.

4. Recognize Student Effort

Students will be challenged to meet high academic goals and to take academically rigorous courses. Student effort will be monitored. If the student's effort is high but academic performance is low, safety nets will be in place to assist the student. On the one hand, students will be encouraged to stretch and meet high standards. In this instance, stress is viewed as a positive motivator. On the other hand, if the stress turns to distress and causes negative performance, intervention strategies will be considered. The key to the personalized learning environment at the secondary schools will be adults connecting with students and closely monitoring their progress. "Timely identification of problems" is necessary for interventions.



"The Senior Project will now be referred to as the Pine-Richland Experience."

3. Extend the Pre-Advanced Placement Program

A pilot pre-AP program was initiated for qualified eighth grade students in 2006-07. This program was expanded to the ninth grade in 2007-08. The pre-AP program is based on the premise that students can perform at rigorous academic levels and that students should be consistently challenged to expand their skills to the next level. The Pre-AP program prepares middle and high school students for higher intellectual engagement. The Pre-AP program stresses the on-going use of vertical articulation teams. In the development of curriculum, it is important that new concepts are introduced at each grade level, that review material is limited, and that there are no gaps in meeting the learning requirements of standards. Concepts and skills taught at a prior grade level should adequately prepare students for the new material in the next grade level. The concept of Pre-AP vertical teams is that AP courses should not be an isolated course but rather a planned program of teaching skills and concepts over several years. The intended outcome is to give teachers of Pre-AP the knowledge and skills to develop a continuum of skill building from one grade to the next. For example, a concentration for discussion by an AP vertical team is the improvement of students' essay writing abilities. As a result, teachers and students are aware of the rubric for grading essays on the AP exam and the core knowledge required for writing strong essay responses. This is taught in the eighth grade Pre-AP program and each year thereafter giving Pine-Richland students a competitive advantage on the AP exam and in college.

4. Expand the Advanced Placement Program

One of the best standard predictors of academic success in college is a student's performance on an advanced placement test. During the 2006-07 school year AP students were required to take the Advanced Placement exam which gave students a complete



college experience. A goal of the blueprint is to expand the number of AP courses offered to students (traditional or e-learning) along with increasing enrollment in the advanced placement program. A standard will be that college bound students at Pine-Richland will be enrolled in at least one Advanced Placement class before they graduate. Likewise, the vision of the blueprint suggests that the Advanced Placement courses in the humanities replace the current honors program in this area. College Preparatory classes will become the option for upper level high school students.

"One of the best predictors of college success is the student's success on AP exams."

Building lesson plans based on identified high standards, which include assessments for learning, and link to curriculum maps will keep instruction at a high level so that students are not bored by material they already know. Nationally recognized educators Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, most noted for their work entitled *Understanding by Design (UbD)* published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) believe that, “A primary goal of education should be the development and deepening of student understanding. Students reveal their understanding most effectively when they are provided with complex, authentic opportunities to explain, interpret, apply, shift perspective, empathize, and self-assess. When applied to complex tasks, these “six facets” provide a conceptual lens through which teachers can better assess student understanding. Student and school performance gains are achieved through regular reviews of results (achievement data and student work) followed by targeted adjustments to curriculum and instruction. Teachers become most effective when they seek feedback from students and their peers and use that feedback to adjust approaches to design and teaching.

Pine-Richland will continue to make “a conscious choice” as to how to best serve our students’ needs by utilizing and validating their feedback and input as well as that of their parents. According to Strong, Silver, and Perini (1999), students want at least four key things from curriculum:

- ❖ **Success.** Students want to feel competent and believe that efforts pay off and are recognized, so standards should be clear.
- ❖ **Curiosity.** Students want to feel engaged by meaningful questions, enigmas, mysteries, and challenges.
- ❖ **Originality.** Students want to create unique products.
- ❖ **Relationships.** Students want to see the relationships between what they are studying and their own experiences and futures.



Additionally, Pine-Richland will continue to focus on helping our students to take an active responsibility for their own learning. Parents and community members will have an even more significant role in helping our students understand that expectations for their future are very high and the community must be united in helping all students succeed. Pine-Richland will offer our children more than managing and surviving in the present. We will increase our commitment to offer the competitive educational opportunities and academic and social foundation for children to become successful leaders of the future.

“Global sophistication will be an intentional focus in our schools.”

F. Implement an Inclusive Approach

Students with special needs enjoy the same challenge of high expectations and compelling material while having their learning needs met as do all students at Pine-Richland. Appropriate support in inclusive settings is in all schools. Students with special needs are independent learners who are fully prepared to function and compete in the global economy.

In order to achieve our goals of preparing students with disabilities to be independent learners, regular education and special education staff must work closely together. Student learning is a shared responsibility. All teachers will be equipped with strategies for accommodating and supporting students.

Individualized Education Plans help to “level the playing field” for students with special needs. By customizing learning for all students, the lines between regular and special education are less evident. Labels become less important. “... All students benefit when the general education curriculum becomes more accessible.” (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 1999).



We take an inclusive approach toward cultural diversity, as well as toward diversity in learning. Caring intensely for each individual means that we invest in one another the time it takes to reach win-win solutions when our perspectives differ. Understanding global perspectives begins here in our community as we learn and work together.

“Lines between special education and regular education will be less evident.”

III. BLUEPRINT FOR ACADEMIC RIGOR

Having Pine-Richland students “college ready” will be a major goal of the Transformation Blueprint. Pine-Richland takes pride that 94 percent of Pine-Richland students transitioned directly into post secondary education at some of the finest colleges or universities in the state or nation (e.g., Duke, Notre Dame, Cornell, Carnegie Mellon, Allegheny, Elon, Penn State, Pitt, among others). Mastering the Pine-Richland School District curriculum will provide each graduate the educational foundation and experiences to excel at the college level. Pine-Richland grads will be accepted into the colleges of their choice.

Several strategies will be used to enhance academic rigor at Pine-Richland. Academic rigor means students are engaged in both content knowledge and the development of cognitive abilities and key learning skills. It means all students will experience such a curriculum. These strategies include implementing an ambitious curriculum and using effective instructional practices such as disciplined inquiry, analytical thinking, comprehension and elaborate and integrated writing instruction across all content areas. Gary Marx in his book *Future-Focused Leadership* believes social and intellectual capital will become economic drivers, intensifying competition for well-educated people. This blueprint emphasizes the need to prepare Pine-Richland students for the Global Knowledge/Information Age. (Gary Marx, *Future Focused Leadership*, 2006, p.48)

A. Map An Ambitious Curriculum

The curriculum is both creative and rigorous. Through technology, the curriculum will soon become more accessible and linked seamlessly to assessments and lesson planning. The expansion of Pre-AP and AP programs will help all Pine-Richland students to be college ready. By building 21st century skills, students will be prepared to take their place in the global economy

1. Identify Creativity and Insightfulness as Important Aspects of Rigor

As we move from the information age to the conceptual age, the challenge is for students to use both sides of their brain as described in Daniel Pink’s book *A Whole New Mind* (2006). The arts will play a vital role in complementing students reasoning, and sequential and analytical skills. Academic rigor means infusing the arts in the classroom to help students exercise their creativity and to encourage inventiveness allowing students to see the big picture. Further rigorous learning requires that students construct knowledge. Creativity is part of learning in all classrooms.

“The goal is to have PR grads accepted into the college of their choice.”

2. Link Curriculum and Assessment to Instruction

The district recently completed a seven-year curriculum renewal cycle and the blueprint suggests that the renewal cycle be reviewed and revised. The curriculum renewal cycle must be flexible and ongoing. Research author and curriculum practitioner Dr. Allan A. Glatthorn stresses, “Curriculum is a process of selection, of choosing what needs to be emphasized.” Glatthorn concludes that, “...certain researched based guidelines help educators in the process of crafting quality curriculum.” Pine-Richland School District strives to structure curriculum so that:

- ❖ Students and teachers can study the most important skills in greater depth.
- ❖ Students use various learning strategies to solve problems.
- ❖ Students acquire the essential skills and knowledge of subjects.
- ❖ Students’ individual differences are recognized which promotes customized learning.
- ❖ Students see the link between the academic and the practical application of content.



Curriculum development, as a dynamic process, is never truly complete. Distinguished educator, Dr. Heidi Hayes Jacobs states, “All decisions about curriculum should be made with the interest of students in mind. Success really comes down to the critical point whereby we are working for specific learners in specific places to meet their specific



needs.” Jacobs quotes Professor William Ouchi (2003, p.159) of UCLA’s Graduate School of Management who states, “Almost every expert who has studied successful schools says that they are learning communities where everyone is on the same page. The adults involved in the school-meaning the parents and teachers-must share the same vision of what the school should be.” Mapping curriculum provides the blueprint for building a community of learners while electronic mapping provides the vehicle to make curriculum easily accessible to staff and to make a direct link to lesson plans and student assessment. Currently, On-Hands software is being developed and piloted for this purpose. The blueprint suggests that a reasonable timeline be established to identify when the computerization of the curriculum will be completed along with the software to be used to complete this process. Dr. Bena Kallick, renowned educator and performance assessment expert believes that, “Electronic mapping presents the opportunity to create new knowledge that can help learning organizations make more intelligent choices for students. The actual format can expand the functions and options for educators.”

“Curriculum development is a dynamic process that is never complete.”