

**THREE SMALL SCHOOLS**  
**AT THE**  
**MANUAL EDUCATIONAL COMPLEX**  
**BY**  
**SANTO NICOTERA**

In school year 2001-2002 the Denver Public Schools and the Manual community, with generous support from outside funders, took a bold step forward into the new millennium. After more than a century of service in northeast Denver as one comprehensive high school, in August 2001 Manual was divided into three, small learning communities: Leadership High School, Millennium Quest High School, and Arts & Cultural Studies High School at the Manual Educational Complex.

Each small school has its own principal, counselor, student advisor, secretary, and office support staff. Each small school has its own small teaching faculty housed primarily on one of three floors. And most importantly, each small school serves a small group of young people (between 300 and 360 students) with a unique program designed to support each student's academic success.

The three small schools faced tremendous challenges from within and without as we attempted to reinvent how young people experience high school in northeast Denver. Fortunately, we were not at the beginning of our school reform process. Four years of building-wide school redesign (guided by the 'Ten Common Principles' of the Coalition of Essential Schools) provided the foundation upon which we were creating the three autonomous learning communities. Four years of school-wide reform had also given us the opportunity to reflect on

what had worked and what had not worked in our community and to further identify/clarify our needs.

Since 1997 Manual High School had been implementing comprehensive school reform under the leadership of Principal Nancy Sutton. As a result of this reform initiative (phased in over four years) a Lower House and an Upper House were created. Ninth and tenth grade student/teacher teams constituted the Foundations House where emphasis was placed on acquisition of foundational skills/knowledge needed for success in high school. At the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade, sophomores were required to complete Rites of Passage (a public exhibition of student work) and upon successful completion chose one of four Programs of Excellence (upper house).

In the Programs of Excellence juniors and seniors received instruction in core academic subjects and courses aligned with their career pathway and had the opportunity to experience internships and job shadowing in areas of career interest. At the end of their senior year every 12<sup>th</sup> grader was required to complete Graduation by Exhibition (another public exhibition of student work). Block scheduling (pure 4x4) was implemented at the outset of the reform initiative and building-wide student advisories ‘Bolt Block’ were implemented in the second year. Throughout these four years, faculty members designed standards-based units of instruction for every course taught and met regularly in Critical Friends Groups to discuss student/teacher work and to engage in collaborative inquiry. All of these efforts represented large-scale attempts to create a building-wide learning environment at Manual that would support student achievement of high academic standards.

Much was accomplished during those four years of school reform. No large urban high school in the country had ever tried to create entire grade level, ‘exhibitions of learning’. At

Manual in 1999, 2000, 2001 more than 600 sophomores successfully completed Rites of Passage into the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. And in 2000-2001 (year 4 of the reform initiative) the entire senior class successfully completed Graduation by Exhibition.

Large urban high schools rarely find ways to gather their faculties together for on-going professional development. At Manual since 1998 every faculty member had participated in 90 minutes per week of professional development (structured into the school day) that included ‘looking at student/teacher work’, collaborative inquiry, and workshops on various teaching strategies. Visitors from all over the city, state, and country had come to Manual to learn about our public exhibitions of student learning, our faculty-wide CFGs, and our building-wide student advisories and Manual staff presented their work throughout the country.

At the end of four years of school restructuring, however, our students were not making the significant advances we had hoped for on the Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP) and other standardized student achievement indicators. The results of the first year of CSAP testing at the high school level (spring 2001) were extremely disappointing: Only 16% of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade scored at or above proficient in reading. At the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, only 10% scored at or above proficiency in reading, 0% in mathematics, and 4% in writing. Attendance rates lagged below 80% throughout the four years of reform and homework return rates below 60%.

Lack of student engagement was also reflected in the high percentage of failing grades earned by students in their classes (in a given year as many as 50% of our students would fail their mathematics courses). The graduation rate from Manual in 2001 was 63.2% and the dropout rate was 9.5%. Based on these kinds of indicators Manual High School was given an ‘Unsatisfactory’ rating by the State of Colorado for school year 2000-2001.

What did we need to be doing differently? What were we missing? The design model we had created using the CES ‘Ten Common Principles’ was supposed to produce the kind of student outcomes we could all be proud of. Why weren’t we getting the better results?

The neighborhoods feeding into Manual are the poorest neighborhoods in Denver. According to 2000 census data the average household income in the neighborhoods where most of our students reside was approximately \$26,000 (Denver was \$42,000). When broken further the data reveals even deeper poverty: per capita income in these three neighborhoods was approximately \$7,000 compared with \$19,000 Denver-wide. The free/reduced lunch rate at Manual has been over 80% throughout the years of school reform. That rate, however, does not reflect the numbers who truly qualified - only those who applied. Our principal feeder schools (elementary and middle) reported free/reduced lunch rates of 93% or higher.

High poverty has gone hand in hand with high student mobility. The mobility rate at Manual during the years of school reform has averaged 100% per year. For a school like Manual with a population of about 1,100 students that means that in a given year there has been on average, 1,100 total moves by students (new enrollments and withdrawals). The stability rate at Manual has averaged 78% during that same time period, so 22% of the total student body was accounting for 1,100 moves. For the average teacher at Manual this meant that the occupants of one-fifth of the student desks in their classroom were changing regularly.

The reform initiative had been designed to negate the impact of high poverty and high mobility by creating building-wide structures that supported academic rigor through increased personalization and accountability. We talked about personalization and accountability throughout the reform initiative’s implementation, however, everything implemented was implemented building-wide and was managed as such from the top down. The substance of the

reform was not the problem. Student advisories, exhibitions of student work, and teacher ‘Critical Friends Groups’ were not the problem. The problem was the ‘scale’ of implementation.

The transition of Manual from one comprehensive high school to three autonomous small schools in 2001-2002 dramatically changed the scale of implementation. Within our small school structure, each school is responsible for creating, implementing, and evaluating teaching and learning activities in their own autonomous learning community. Each school is accountable for student and teacher work performances, attendance, student discipline and all other indicators of student and teacher engagement within their small learning community. Leadership High School, Millennium Quest High School, and Arts & Cultural Studies High School at the Manual Educational Complex – each with a small faculty, led by one instructional leader – are now responsible for their own small student population.

Each school has been engaged in conversations about how ‘small school’ thinking and problem solving about student engagement is different from ‘large school’ thinking about these kinds of issues. Our greatest need at this point is increased personalization and accountability but our greatest weakness (one that we are actively striving to overcome through focused professional development) is relying on ‘large school thinking’ instead of ‘small school thinking’ to address the educational issues that arise.

Non-attending students no longer fall through the cracks. During our last year as a large comprehensive high school the entire administrative team, the school counselors, and every other available support staff had come together for weeks trying (and failing) to get a handle on attendance at Manual. We were lucky to average 75% attendance and a 75% attendance rate meant that on any given day 300 students were not in the building. Hundreds of students were chronically non-attending. We struggled and struggled together to devise a strategy for solving

this problem and in the end could only develop a set of norms for withdrawing non-attendees from the schools rolls.

Last year each small school received a monthly analysis of student attendance (overall, by period, by ethnicity, and by gender). Each small school received a monthly student alpha list that showed attendance by period and the same list sorted by attendance rates. And more importantly, last year each small school engaged in regular conversations about the students who were having attendance problems using this data to devise strategies together (including home visits and student/parent/teacher contracts) that are addressed this need. Last year (our first year as small schools) daily attendance never dipped below 80%. The same kinds of data-driven conversations have been taking place in each of the small schools concerning student academic performance, student achievement as measured by standardized tests, and student discipline.

During the implementation of the four-year reform initiative the Manual community carefully explored the potential of small schools. Our enthusiasm and commitment to this reform approach was strengthened as we visited small high schools throughout the country and examined the research on small schools. In February 2000 six parents and six teachers from Manual's site-based management committee (the CDM) visited the Julia Richman Educational Complex in NYC, which consisted of six schools (including three small high schools). While in New York, the team also visited Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School in the Bronx, a small school that was broken off from Madison High School, a large failing high school. As a result of that visit and the positive conversations that ensued within the Manual community, a proposal to allow Manual to pilot 'small schools' within the ninth grade in 2000-2001 was made to the Board of Education and was approved. Fourteen teachers were directly involved in the 'small schools' pilot but the entire faculty was engaged in conversations regarding the effectiveness of

the model throughout the year. Also during school year 2000-2001 much effort was made to broaden the ‘small schools’ conversation to include our alumni association ‘The Friends of Manual’ and the 150 business/community members who participated in the ‘Career Coaches Program’ at Manual twice per month. It was members of these two groups, Bruce Hoyt and Anna Jo Haynes, who arranged and spear-headed our ‘small schools’ presentation to Tom Vander Ark of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in February and to the Board of Education in April 2001.

The Manual faculty had always been supportive of the spirit of the reform initiative even if at times we had debated among ourselves the value of its different parts. In the fall of 1998 the faculty had voted unanimously to pursue CSRD funding choosing the Coalition of Essential Schools as our national school reform design model. Members of the faculty had made site-visits to several small schools in Denver and Colorado including Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning, New Vista High School, Eagle Rock in Estes Park, and Steam Boat Springs High School. In the spring of 1999, seven teachers (including all of the core academic department heads) had visited Fenway Middle College Pilot High School in Boston, a small CES school that is part of the Boston Collaborative, to better understand how curricular concerns are resolved in a small school. In November 1999, 22 faculty members had participated in the Coalition of Essential Schools “Fall Forum” in Atlanta to investigate the effectiveness of small schools on student achievement and engagement. Upon their return, informal and formal faculty-wide discussions had taken place concerning the feasibility of restructuring Manual as multiple small schools. And, as was noted above, six teachers participated in the trip to NYC in February 2000.

However, when the opportunity presented itself in February 2001 to ask the Gates Foundation for funding to implement ‘small schools’ in school year 2001-2002 many teachers expressed concern that all of this was happening too quickly. When the proposal was approved Nancy Sutton knew that the first two months of the plan’s implementation would be critical to ensure buy-in from the entire faculty.

In May 2001 teachers were invited to complete a ‘choice of school’ sheet on which they ranked their interest in three different thematic small schools (the three themes were derived from Manual’s 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade thematic Programs of Excellence). They were also asked to write a short essay explaining their choice and describing the skills/knowledge/expertise they could bring to their school. Some teachers felt uncomfortable about choosing a ‘school’ without first knowing who the principal would be and voiced these concerns to Ms. Sutton. Her response was, “Each faculty will choose its own principal once the faculties of the three schools are formed.” The fact that she herself was taking a huge risk in giving up her own high school principal position for the coming school year as part of the small schools’ proposal gave her words extra moral authority on this matter of faculty school choice prior to principal selection.

Every effort was made to give faculty members their first choice and by some great luck (or perhaps because faculty already saw themselves aligned with certain themes due to prior work in a Program of Excellence) only a handful of negotiations were needed. The first official task for each newly formed faculty was to meet together and create a ‘principal selection’ committee and a ‘principal selection’ process that everyone could agree upon. Two weeks later the three ‘small school’ committees interviewed eleven principal candidates and the top choice of each committee was offered a position and accepted. Marsha Pointer became principal of Leadership High School, Estevan Duran became principal of Millennium Quest High School,

and Phil Gallegos became principal of Arts and Cultural Studies High School. Thus in a few short weeks a process took place that sealed the buy-in of most of the faculty. During the first four months of small school implementation, amidst the stress and inevitable confusion caused by such an incredibly difficult undertaking, one thing held true: strong teacher commitment and loyalty to their small school principal. We believe that at least partial credit for this deep support must be given to the ‘teacher-empowering’ principal selection process outlined above.

Throughout the four years of reform initiative implementation and during the more recent move to create three small schools, Manual received technical assistance from a number of individuals with deep roots in the Coalition of Essential Schools. Back in the spring of 1997 Deborah Meier spent a day with us when we were embarking on the original four-year, Lower House/Upper House plan. Many of us remember her admonishment/warning that day regarding our plans to create a lower and upper house at the high school, “Don’t kid your self,” she had said, “this is not small schools and in the end it will fail.” - To which we now respond, “Better late than never, Debbie.”

Van Schoales (former director of BayCES) provided much needed consultancy in 1996 and 1997 when we were first designing Manual’s reform initiative. He is currently Director of the Colorado Small High Schools Initiative and Vice President of the Colorado Children’s Campaign, the fiscal agent for our grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This organization provides much technical assistance including the evaluation/support services of Dr. Steven Ross from the University of Memphis. Patrick McQuillan, formerly a researcher for CES National, has provided on-going support to our reform initiative since the 1997-1998 school year. Currently at Boston College, Dr. McQuillan is working with Dr. Ross on our internal evaluation. Rick Lear, Director of the Small School Project in Washington state, provided much

needed support in May/June of 2001 when we were implementing the initial phase of the ‘small schools initiative’. He continues to provide moral support from afar. The growing network of ‘small schools’ practitioners from around the country has been an ever-present support throughout this process.

Each small high school at the Manual Educational Complex has a different thematic focus. Millennium Quest High School specializes in mathematics, science, and medicine. Leadership High School is for students who are interested in a career in business or government. Arts and Cultural Studies High School offers academics through the lens of art, including performing arts, fine arts, and visual arts.

Although the Programs of Excellence provided a body of material and experiences from which to draw, the theme and mission of each the three high schools and the way these themes would be supported through curricula and instructional practices were not fleshed out at the outset of our process. Once the three faculties were formed and their instructional leaders were chosen the hard work of designing powerful thematic curriculum within each of the schools began. During the Summer of 2001 fifteen teachers (representing each of the schools) participated in a ‘Curriculum Design’ workshop where they used our ‘planning backwards’ curriculum design model to create exemplar units of instruction that focused on the theme of their respective schools. These units were then made available to the faculties of the three small schools and every faculty member was required to design standards-based, thematic units of curriculum for implementation in their classrooms during the 2001-2002 school year. The three principals, together with the Transition Team, created a curriculum design rubric to be used in principal/teacher conferences regarding curriculum unit development and a classroom observation tool to be used for observations of these units in practice.

During the four-year reform initiative, Manual High School used a professional development model in which on-going professional development was structured into the weekly school schedule. A 4x4 pure block schedule was established for the entire building and teachers were assigned daily planning time in one of the extended blocks (no duties). Each teacher gave one block of planning per week back to the school for professional development. Faculty, assigned individual planning in a particular block, met together for professional development one block per week.

Professional development during this weekly planning block looked a little different in different school years, but certain basic elements have been common throughout. Faculty members were required to attend during their planning block. At regular intervals (e.g. 4<sup>th</sup> Wed-last year, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed-two years ago) planning groups met together as Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) to look at student and teacher work together. On alternate Wednesdays planning groups met with school administration to discuss issues/problems and/or hear presentations. During one year these groups met together one block per month as action research teams. In addition to the regularly scheduled, weekly professional development blocks, Manual faculty has reported to Manual two days earlier than the rest of the district (at the beginning of the school year, last five years) and participated in a four-day ‘Summer Teaching and Learning Institute’. These institutes addressed different teaching/learning issues including teaching on the block, standards-based curriculum design, student advisories, Critical Friends Groups, and designing authentic assessments.

In the summer of 1997 two faculty members had been sent to Rhode Island for the Annenberg Institute for School Reform’s CFG coaches training. Five faculty were sent the following summer (including Nancy Sutton) and three more in 1999. Having ten, Annenberg

trained, CFG coaches in the building (skilled in the facilitation of small groups of faculty) had a tremendous, positive impact on the level of teacher discourse within the building. We believe that one of the reasons Manual was able to make the move to small schools in such a short time frame was because the Manual faculty was used to engaging in difficult conversations using established norms and processes (professional conversation protocols).

Professional development in 2001-2002, however, was structured differently than in years past. During that year of transition to three autonomous small schools, we used a building-wide, block schedule with 6 blocks of instructional time instead of four. Teachers were in contact with students 5 of the 6 blocks with one block for planning. Grade level teaching teams within each of the three small schools were provided common blocks of instructional time and a common planning time so that they could use the blocks in alternative ways to extend instructional time.

Professional development did not occur during the teachers' planning blocks. However, students were dismissed at 1:20pm on two Wednesdays per month as part of the small schools initiative approved by the school board. And from 1:30pm until 4:00pm on these two days per month, each small school had a block of professional development time. Each school was assigned a Transition Team point-person (who also was a trained CFG coach) and throughout the school year each small high school used this time to develop their respective faculties into small 'professional learning communities'. At the beginning of the school year each small school principal (with transition team assistance) conducted its own 'Summer Teaching and Learning Institute' with their own cadre of teachers and set the tone/mission for these bimonthly meetings. These regularly scheduled professional development experiences were designed around our common goal to increase personalization and accountability and thereby positively impact

student achievement. They were also designed to get at our weakness of using ‘y each big-school thinking’ instead of ‘small school thinking’ to address problems. In school year 2002-2003 each small school has adopted a different school schedule (4X4, a modified block, and a six period day) and each school has carved out its own professional development program.

Each small high school at the Manual Educational Complex is a grade 9-12 school. Each small school principal and faculty is responsible for the 300-360 students who have chosen their school. During the transition to complete autonomy (2001-2002) some sharing of teaching resources was occurring (i.e. Advanced Placement and many elective courses were offered to students from all three high schools). However, in 2002-2003 complete autonomy has been maintained - students do not take courses with students from the other schools in the regular school day.

This obviously has tremendous implications on curricular offerings within the three small schools. When we broke the Manual faculty into three separate entities at the end of 2000-2002, we did so without addressing the unique FTE requirements of three thematically different schools. Our major concern was that each school would have the necessary allotment of core content teachers to service their student population at each grade level. Elective teachers were assigned where they seemed to align thematically (by teacher choice). FTE assignments matched student enrollment in each of the schools so that student/teacher ratios are fairly equitable across the Complex. However, as we transitioned toward more complete autonomy (and shared classes became zero period exceptions), each small school had to have that very difficult conversation about how a small number of FTEs should best be used to serve the young people in their particular school. This continues to be a difficult ‘small school’ that each school must face annually.

As part of the proposal presented to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and to the DPS Board of Education in the spring of 2001 Nancy Sutton agreed to vacate her position as high school principal at Manual to take a two-year ‘transition principal’ position funded by Gates. This allowed us to create four principal positions at Manual: three ‘small school’ principals and one ‘operations’ principal. Denver Public Schools agreed to pick-up the extra, on-going operational cost (an extra \$16,000) of having four principals at Manual (at ‘middle school principal’ salary levels) instead of the regular allotment of one high school principal and three assistant principals. According to the original plan the four principals would report directly to the Superintendent or his designee and Ms. Sutton would serve as interior coach during the transition. A ‘Policies and Practices Board’ was to be formed to serve as a buffer between the Superintendent and the three small schools.

In May 2001 the Board of Education hired a new superintendent and one of the first official actions of Superintendent Jerry Wartgow was to appoint Nancy Sutton to be half-time Assistant Area Superintendent for Northeast Denver and ‘Transition Principal’ at Manual half-time. Her duties as Assistant Superintendent included the direct supervision of the four principals at Manual as well as the principals of all the Manual ‘feeder pattern’, elementary and middle schools. The Manual community embraced this development as a wonderful opportunity to impact the entire Manual feeder system, even to the point of imagining a Manual mini-district. However, the Superintendent’s decision had an unforeseen impact on developments inside the Manual Complex. Throughout the first year of small school implementation there was an ever-present tension between Ms. Sutton and the small school principals regarding her dual role of ‘transition coach’ and ‘supervisor’. In the end this proved to be a creative tension which led to a quicker transition to complete autonomy than was initially anticipated.

Aside from this change in Nancy Sutton’s position, the organizational structure proposed in the spring is the structure currently in place at the Manual Educational Complex.

The following is an outline of the organizational structure proposed to Gates and the DPS Board and followed throughout the first year of small school implementation. It is important to note that all positions shown in this chart (unless noted with an asterisk) were/are paid for by DPS. The school district upon approving our proposal agreed to fund an additional \$140,000 in on-going costs to operate three small schools in place of one comprehensive school.

<b>Leadership High School</b>	<b>Millennium Quest High School</b>	<b>Arts &amp; Cultural Studies High School</b>	<b>Manual Educational Complex-Operations</b>
<b>Principal</b> Marsha Pointer <b>Student Advisor</b> Cliff Meeley <b>Counselor</b> James Durgin <b>Office Support II</b> Rosanda Jackson <b>Partnership Coordinator*</b> Mary Salsich <b>Secretary II</b> Cheryl Conner <b>Teacher Leader(.5)*</b> Barbara Ingram <b>Teaching Faculty (21)</b>	<b>Principal</b> Estevan Duran <b>Student Advisor</b> Mary LaGuardia <b>Counselor</b> Judy Fisher <b>Office Support II</b> Malvin Curry <b>Partnership Coordinator*</b> Kristen Harkness <b>Secretary II</b> Dora Bruce <b>Teacher Leader(.5)*</b> Irene Meschia <b>Teaching Faculty (18.5)</b>	<b>Principal</b> Phil Gallegos <b>Student Advisor</b> Marge Lentz <b>Counselor</b> Mark Osmun <b>Office Support II</b> Ruben Perez <b>Partnership Coordinator*</b> Barbara Nash <b>Secretary II</b> Carmen Walker <b>Teacher Leader(.5)*</b> Jeff Leake <b>Bilingual Coordinator</b> Kathy Bougher <b>Teaching Faculty (25.5)</b>	<b>Principal</b> Patricia Ludwig <b>Tech Coordinator</b> Martha Wilcox <b>Tech Assistant*</b> Casey Campbell <b>Accountant*</b> Mary Alyce Owens <b>Librarian</b> Debbie Schmuck <b>Library Assistant</b> Mary Pacheco <b>Bookkeeper</b> Renelle Wright <b>Secretary I (2)</b> Michelle Maxfield Marti Mascarenas <b>Nurse (2)</b> Dianne Deschenelle Francis Mackie <b>Social Worker</b> Ana Buckman-Hart <b>Security (4)</b> <b>Custodians (13)</b>

There were five members on the Manual Educational Complex ‘Transition Team’: Nancy Sutton (.5), Santo Nicotera (1.0), Theress Pidick (.5), Brooke O’Drobinack (.5), and Mariah Dickson (.25). The Nancy Sutton (.5), transition principal, position was paid for by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the other (2.25) FTEs were funded by the Colorado Trust and the Donnell-Kaye Foundation. This fully funded, organizational structure not only sustained the transition to three small schools in the short term (with the Transition Team) but continues to sustain the three small schools over the long-term (without the Transition Team) because the critical organizational pieces are funded by the school district itself. The Area Superintendent has direct oversight of the small school principals and each principal has oversight of their small school. The operations principal position was reduced to an assistant principal in the second year of small school implementation and has oversight of the general operations of the Complex under the joint supervision of the three principals.

During the implementation of ‘small schools’ at Manual we disaggregated and attempted to summarize/analyze four different types of quantitative data: attendance, grades, standardized test scores, and some demographic data.

Attendance: We exported from SASI monthly attendance data to Excel and created a formula for attendance percentage that divides the number of class periods attended by the total number of periods possible per month. Each principal received a monthly attendance report comparing the small schools that included (for each school):

- Period 1-6 Average Attendance %, Period 1-6 Average Absence %, Average Attendance % for Each Period.
- Percentage of Students Who Have Attendance At/Better than 90%, 85%, 80%, 75%, 70%, and 60%

- Percentage of Students Who Have Attendance At/Less Than 50%
- Average Attendance % for Each Ethnic Group and Average Attendance % for Each Gender Group.

Along with the monthly attendance report each principal received an alpha list of the student body of their small school with absences shown for each period and the average attendance % and absence % for each student. They also received the same list sorted by attendance %. With the attendance reports each principal also received charts comparing the three small schools around: Overall Attendance, African American Overall Attendance, Hispanic Overall Attendance, Period 1 Attendance, and Percent of Students with 85% Attendance or Better.

Grades: We exported from SASI to Excel student grades at the end of each grading period for the ninth and tenth grade teams in each of the three small schools and we compiled student grades for each core teacher in the ninth and tenth grade. At the end of each grading period each principal received a Grade Distribution/Comparison that included the following: Grade distribution for students in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teams in their school by core content teacher, percentage of students earning A's, B's, C's, D's, and F's for each core content teacher, and average student GPA for each core content teacher.

Along with these reports each principal received a list of the students for each content teacher in their 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teams sorted by the grades they earned in that grading period. At the end of each grading periods each principal also received a grade distribution comparison that included the above data for each of the three schools. At the end of the grading period principals also received a set of charts comparing the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teams in the three small schools as to the percentage of students in each core area that earned a 'C' or higher.

Standardized Test Scores: In September of 2001 the Department of Assessment and Testing sent us CSAP, ITED, 6-Trait, and Apprenda test scores in reading, writing and math for all students in the building. We were able to disaggregate this data for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teams in each of the three schools so that we had two different test indicators for reading, for writing, and for math. Each principal then received the following student data lists (alpha sorted and score sorted) for both their 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teams:

9<sup>th</sup> Grade: 2001 CSAP Reading, S-2001 ITED Reading, F-2001 6-Trait, 2000 CSAP Writing, S-2001 ITED Math, and 2001 CSAP Math.

10<sup>th</sup> Grade: 2001 CSAP Reading, S-2001 ITED Reading, F-2001 6-Trait, 1999 CSAP Writing, S-2001 ITED Math, and 2001 CSAP Math.

Principals also received data tables displaying this information for their 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teams and tables comparing the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade teams in the three small schools in reading, writing, and math as indicated by the standardized tests cited above. It was our intention to use these standardized test indicators at the end of school year 2001-2002 to measure student achievement progress in each of the three small schools. Part of this analysis would include ‘pair-matching’ test scores (we would look at test scores for students who have attended one of the three small schools for the entire period being tested and for whom we have two sets of scores – 2001 or earlier and 2002).

Other Demographic Data: As part of the monthly attendance reports, principals received updated ethnicity and gender information including the number/percentage of students enrolled from each ethnic group and the number/percentage of students enrolled from each gender group. Principals also received charts displaying the following demographic information for each of the

three small schools: Ethnic Breakdown, Gender Breakdown, Percentage of African American Students, Percentage of Hispanic Students, and Percentage of Male Students.

We provided this data throughout the first year of small school implementation. The purpose of providing all of this student data to each of the three small schools on a regular basis was to create on-going opportunities for internal, formative evaluation and to help ensure that the strategies discussed and decisions made by the small schools were data-driven discussion/decisions throughout the implementation process. We hoped to thereby develop a culture of data-driven, decision making in each of the three small high schools over time. The data collected thus far was also an important baseline from which we could make summative evaluations of the progress made towards meeting our goals/objectives. Each small high school must serve ‘all’ of their students and we believe that this kind of data collection and analysis will help us know whether or not we are doing just that.

The Colorado Small High Schools Initiative has contracted with Steve Ross from the University of Memphis and Patrick McQuillan from Boston College to provide a three-year, comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of ‘small schools’ at Manual. Based on this on-going evaluation end-of-year reports are/were provided to each school and to our funders.

Additionally, the Transition Team conducted three month-long ‘Listening Protocols’ in October, January, and May of 2001-2002 that provided opportunities for faculty members to give warm and cool feedback on the implementation process and these results were published verbatim for building-wide review. Dr. McQuillan provided summary/analysis of the ‘Listening Protocol’ results for public review within two weeks of protocol completion.

Finally, the American Institute for Research (AIR) selected the Manual Educational Complex for an in-depth evaluation (conducted in March 2002) as part of its nation-wide evaluation of all Bill and Melinda Gate Foundation ‘small school’ initiatives.

There is an ever-growing, national network of ‘small school’ practitioners of which Manual is excited to be a part. Not only have we received much support from our ‘significant others’ within this network, but we have also given much. During school year 2001-2002, Nancy Sutton, Santo Nicotera, and/or Theress Pidick presented ten different workshops related to the implementation of ‘small schools’ at Manual to participants in Colorado, California, and Washington. We hosted site visits to the Manual Educational Complex of teams from Albuquerque, Sacramento, and Seattle, as well as, local school teams and individuals. Visits to the Complex were becoming so frequent we had to limit team visits to the last two days of each month so as not to distract the ‘small schools’ from their work.

The transition expenditures (paid for by CSRD, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Colorado Trust, and the Donell-Kaye Foundation) have ensured that the three small schools are founded on a strong foundation. Because of the generous support of all of our partners we believe that Leadership High School, Millennium Quest High School, and Arts and Cultural Studies High School at the Manual Educational Complex will serve the young people of northeast Denver well long into the next century.