Small Schools Study Tours

School Redesign Network
Stanford University - School of Education
Spring, 2003

The School Redesign Network is a learning collaborative that helps school leaders to develop a broader knowledge base about school design, teaching and learning, and professional development, and a deeper understanding of the features of schools that have been successfully redesigned to support excellence and equity. As part of this work, the Network seeks in particular to act as a resource for educators engaged in the process of redesigning large schools or creating start-up small schools. The Network has developed a series of Study Tours designed to provide these school communities with an opportunity to explore their work through an in-depth professional development experience within the context of highly functioning, personalized schools.

During the weeks of March 3rd and March 24th, the Network will facilitate these weeklong Study Tours at established, successful small schools in New York City. Building on the success of Study Tours from this past spring and fall, participants will spend two days at both International and Landmark High Schools observing and learning in collaboration with California colleagues and host school educators. In addition, participants will visit the Julia Richman Education Complex to learn about this formerly large comprehensive high school now successfully redesigned into a complex with several small schools.

How does the Network define a successful small school?

Successful schools feature the following:

- Quality curriculum, instruction and assessment practices.
- Significant evidence of student learning.
- Design features that allow for personalization in important ways.
- Evidence of student attendance, retention from grade to grade, and graduation.
- A professional culture.

We have specifically chosen Study Tour schools for their success in creating personalized, effective schools with these features. We have researched each of the schools and, through multiple visits and our previous Study Tours, established strong relationships with teachers and administrators. Each school has enthusiastically agreed to be involved with this project. (A description of the schools is included below).
What issues will the Study Tour explore?

Through a series of questions and readings, the Study Tour will explore each school and how its experience can guide the development of your school. On the Study Tour, we will consider the big picture:

- How does instruction drive the schedule, the organization of teachers, the class assignments of students, professional development, etc.?
- What evidence is there of teachers knowing students well and how is this achieved?
- What evidence is there of strong teacher-student relationships?
- What evidence is there that all students have access to challenging curriculum?
- What evidence is there that students are supported to achieve at high levels?
- What evidence is there of professional collaboration focused on student learning?
- What do adults do together to sustain the ongoing development of the school?
- What is different about this school?
  - How does this school approach and support instruction and what is the evidence?
  - What does classroom practice look like?
  - Does this school do anything different about instruction from what we do? How do they do it? Why do they do it that way?
  - What surprised us about the school? Why?
  - What would we like to find out more about now that we have visited the school?
  - What was the most powerful thing about the visit?

What will the Study Tour look like?

“Not every teacher is at 150% on every day and that may be the case on the day you visit… It’s not that this school is everything and your school is nothing… You are not here to copy, but to see what is possible.”

-Ann Cook, Urban Academy, Julia Richman Education Complex

Before departing, each team member will receive a reader with a series of articles chosen to provide context for the Study Tour. Team members will meet with Network staff in California to prepare for the trip (in person or via conference call). Once in New York, your Study Tour will begin on Monday morning with a 7:00 AM orientation breakfast meeting. Your team will then spend two full days each at Landmark and International. At each school, you will have an opportunity to observe classes and to meet with school leaders, teachers, students and parents (where possible). Each afternoon, your team will debrief the day’s experience and review your school’s particular needs. Friday will be spent visiting the Julia Richman Education Complex where you will meet with school leaders, learn about the Complex’s successful redesign process and tour the Complex’s small schools.

After school on Thursday afternoon, we will have a Grand Conversation with Dr. Jacqueline Ancess, a national leader on school redesign and Co-Director of the National
Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST) at Teachers College, Columbia University. After our conversation, there will be a **group dinner at “Rain”** on the Upper Westside. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings will be free for you to explore the City.

What schools will we visit?

**International High School**

International is a small, seventeen year old school located at LaGuardia Community College in Queens, NY. The school is specifically targeted at English language learners and currently has students from 47 countries who speak 35 different languages. International graduates 90-95% of its students each year sending 85-95% to college. The school’s Performance Based Standards for Graduation drive its interdisciplinary curriculum. The faculty is a mix of seasoned veterans and younger teachers.

**Landmark High School**

Landmark is a small, nine year old school located in a converted office building just off the southern tip of Central Park on the west side of Manhattan. The vast majority of Landmark’s students take the subway from Washington Heights, a low-income neighborhood on the northern tip of Manhattan. The school is focused on preparing its students for college with 85-95% of its students enrolling in college and 70% going to four-year institutions. The school is driven by portfolios/exhibitions and makes use of advisories, block scheduling, and team planning. The faculty is largely young, but highly talented and dedicated.

**Julia Richman Education Complex**

The Julia Richman Education Complex opened in 1993 on Manhattan’s east side in a building that formerly housed a 2400-student comprehensive high school with a graduation rate of 25 percent. Today, the Complex houses four small high schools (Urban Academy, Vanguard High School, Manhattan International High School and Talent Unlimited High School), Ella Baker K-8 School, a school for children with autism, an infant-toddler nursery, a teen parent resource center, and a professional development center. High school graduation rates and college going rates for the entire Complex are now consistently around 90%.

Who should participate?

The Study Tours have been designed specifically for educators, parents and students who are in the process of redesigning large schools or creating start-up small schools. Each school team should include at least two participants. Teams might find it desirable to send three participants who represent different roles within the school community (teachers from different disciplines, administrators, parents, students, etc.). **In our experience, teams that have included both teachers and administrators (ideally the**
principal and a district administrator) have found the most success on the Study Tours. Preference will be given to teams with this composition.

Expectations for participants:

The Study Tour is designed to be a rigorous learning experience. Participants will be expected to fully participate in all aspects of the Study Tour including the pre-Study Tour meeting with Network staff, school visits, shared readings, debriefing sessions, reflection activities, the Monday breakfast meeting, and the Thursday evening Grand Conversation/group dinner.

Participants will also be expected to attend continuing learning opportunities upon returning to California and be active members of the School Redesign Network. Some ways the learning community may stay connected include additional readings and reading groups, summer institutes, workshops and Saturday morning breakfast groups. Once your school is established, you may also be asked to host a future study tour at your school.

The Network’s Role:

The Network has dedicated extensive resources to the research and development of the Study Tour model. As was mentioned earlier, each site has been visited and relationships have been established with New York educators to foster a rich learning experience through the Study Tour. This past spring and fall, the Network successfully piloted the Study Tour model and has refined it based on the feedback of participants. The Network is working with each school to establish a schedule and will additionally handle some of the trip logistics (see below). A Network staff member will be on site at each school to help in the facilitation of the Study Tour. Finally, the Network will provide post-Study Tour support to facilitate the continuing learning opportunities that will occur.

Study Tour Dates, Finances, and Application Process:

Study Tours are scheduled for the weeks of March 3rd and March 24th. The Network will offer additional Study Tour opportunities in the fall (dates TBA). (Note: Study Tours will begin with a 7:00 AM breakfast meeting early Monday morning of each week. To accommodate this, you will need to depart the Sunday before and, we recommend, spend the night in New York.)

The Network will cover the cost of:

- Creating the Study Tour opportunity (all expenses for research and development including advance trips to New York and for the support of post-Study Tour continued learning opportunities).
- All Network staff expenses during the Study Tour.
- A portion of the following costs: fees paid to host schools and to our Grand Conversation speaker, printing the Study Tour reader, one evening group dinner and the Monday breakfast meeting.
Participating schools will cover the cost of:

- **$600 per individual team member participation fee.** (This includes a portion of the following costs: fees paid to host school and our Grand Conversation speaker, printing the Study Tour reader, one evening group dinner and the Monday breakfast meeting.)

- **Airfare** (Roundtrip fares on several major airlines (American, United, etc.) for the above dates with a Saturday night stay and 21 day advance purchase are ranging from $350-375 plus taxes. Alternatively, roundtrip tickets on JetBlue to JFK currently start at $290 plus taxes and do not require a Saturday night stay. LaGuardia is the closest airport to Manhattan, but offers the fewest direct flights. Newark and JFK are roughly the same distance from Manhattan.)

- **Hotel** (The Network will reserve a block of rooms at a reduced rate at a centrally located hotel (most likely the Metropolitan Hotel on Lexington Avenue at East 51st Street.) Individual schools will then make their own reservations with the hotel using our booking number (More details on this to follow). The rate this past fall was $170 per night plus taxes.)

- **Meals.** (With the exception of one Network sponsored dinner and one Network sponsored breakfast mentioned above.)

- **Ground transportation.**

- **Limited grants are available. Please inquire.**

Schools interested in participating should submit the attached application with:

- A brief statement of purpose for joining the Study Tour.
- A firm list of participants.
- Emergency contact information for participants.
- Your preference of either the week of March 3rd or March 24th. Please also indicate if the other week is an option.
- Number of hotel rooms needed. (Note: This will assist us in insuring that the hotel holds a sufficient number of rooms at the reduced rate. As a reminder, you will eventually be responsible for making your own reservation using our block number. Please consider the Sunday evening prior to the start of the Residency and note that if you choose a major airline, they typically reduce fares for Saturday evening stays.)

Applications for March Study Tours should be received no later than 12:00 PM on Friday, January 24, 2003. Please e-mail to peter.ross@stanford.edu or fax to 650-736-0968 (Attention: Peter Ross).

For more information on the School Redesign Network at the Stanford University School of Education, please visit our website at [http://www.schoolredesign.net](http://www.schoolredesign.net).

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**Questions?** Please contact Peter Ross at peter.ross@stanford.edu or 650-723-3419.