



### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This document represents a critical step in the long and challenging process to improve high school education in the city of Pittsfield. A Futures Team, consisting of educators, students, parents, and business and institutional leaders, was assembled to give deep consideration to the exploration of four goals. These are:

1. Improve education
2. Create school facilities which are more visible and attractive
3. Make educational delivery more efficient
4. Stop the flight of parents to surrounding towns

These goals were addressed through a process which built on the current successes of the Pittsfield city high schools and gave consideration to the most effective ways of learning, school organization, community context and connections, and facilities planning.

### 1.2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Executive Summary outlines the Essential Concepts of the Educational Vision and High School Facilities Master Plan developed by the Futures Team for Pittsfield’s high schools.

### ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS

The Futures Team quickly realized that meeting goals one through three would result in the meeting of goal four. The essential concepts that emerged for school organization and facilities planning are:

#### ONE SCHOOL SITE BETTER THAN TWO

All of the goals are better met with all students in Pittsfield housed on a single site. Such school organization allows:

- Efficient operations due to economies of scale
- The most opportune and least restrictive choices for students and parents
- Administrative ease and efficiencies through close proximity

## **EFFICIENT LARGE SCALE OPERATIONS WITH PERSONAL SMALL SCALE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

Large high schools offer operational efficiencies, but if created in the traditional American high school model, can have counterproductive aspects of anonymity and institutional qualities which research has shown contradict rather than support the overall goals.

Mitigating the negative consequences of large schools requires thoughtful, innovative school organization which personalizes the experience for students, educators, parents, and community. This can be achieved by:

- Creation of Small Learning Communities. Proposed here are:
  - Ninth Grade Houses, to ease transition and focus on learning opportunities
  - Thematic Academies for 10<sup>th</sup> through 12 grades. Students would make informed choices for preferred Academies at the end of ninth grade
- Concentration of school facilities on a single site

## **ENHANCE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

Research shows that student learning is enhanced when schools are connected to their communities. Parents and grandparents can be strong supporters of learning. This support should be encouraged through school organization, programs, and facilities design. The high school facilities

should be designed to offer relevant and interesting programs for all community members.

## **SPORTS, LEADERSHIP, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OPPORTUNITIES MUST BE NURTURED**

Research has shown that student learning is enhanced when students participate in school-related programs beyond the classroom. Additionally, high school programs, particularly sports and performing arts, can make valuable contributions to the social and cultural quality of City life.

The ability of a school organization to foster a significant number of opportunities for students is directly related to school size. Multiple, smaller schools will have more sports teams, more class plays, and more class presidents than a single, larger school serving the same enrollment.

Two high schools on a single site are favored by the Futures Team largely as a strategy for delivering continued and expanded opportunities for students.

## **NEW CONSTRUCTION BETTER THAN RENOVATION**

The current high school buildings are forty and seventy years old. Both are planning statements of their time. However, best practices education has changed considerably, and is expected to continue evolving in the next several decades. The existing buildings present severe challenges in meeting the Educational Vision.

The Futures Team and the architects developed, and the Futures Team reviewed, both renovation and new construction facilities options. The conclusion: Renovation of the existing high schools would compromise the Educational

Vision, and diminish the ability to meet the overall goals. New construction can meet the goals of this study.

**INTEGRATION OF APPLIED LEARNING AND ACADEMIC LEARNING**

The Educational Vision calls for a holistic approach to student learning based on a variety of educational strategies.

Consequently, the proposed school organizations support:

- Integration of career-technical/vocational learning and core academic learning
- Close cooperation of the arts, both visual and performing, with academic learning through joint coursework and programs
- Correlation of physical education and life-long wellness with core academic learning

The existing buildings were designed with extreme separation of these “hands-on” learning spaces from core academic learning spaces, and thus present a severe challenge to meeting the overall goals

**LEARNING IN COMMUNITY SITES**

High school education can be more interesting and relevant to many students if it takes place outside of school, e.g., in service learning curricula, and internships in businesses and institutions. The schools already have such programs, but these need to be increased in scale and organizational support to provide a reasonable number of opportunities for Pittsfield’s students.

**VISIBLE, ACCESSIBLE LOCATION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY**

To enrich community connections and to serve all ages of the community requires a readily accessible and highly visible

school site. The current Pittsfield HS site is both, but is too small to meet functional needs as the single site. The current Taconic HS site has adequate size for all of Pittsfield’s high school students, but is not very visible or accessible to the community.

**CONCEPTS, OPTIONS, AND RESULTS**

As has been noted, several school organization concepts and planning options were developed and reviewed by the Futures Team.

The organizational concepts are:

- One School/One Site
- Two Schools/One Site
- Two Schools/Two Sites

The Futures Team reviewed and voted upon these concepts relative to how well they met the overall goals. The results of a secret ballot are:

GOAL	One School/One Site	Two Schools/One Site	Two Schools/Two Sites
1. Improve Education	0	22	5
2. More attractive	0	17	10
3. More efficient	7	20	0

As noted earlier, the fourth goal of reducing “flight” will be met through meeting the other three goals.

The Futures Team voted twice on its preferences for each of the organizational concepts. The scoring for these was:

Workshop 4 vote on school organizational models:

- One School/One Site: 0

- Two Schools/One Site: 26 ½
- Two Schools/Two Sites: 6

The earlier vote in Workshop 3 for what was then four organizational models was:

- One School/One Site: 7
- Two Schools/One Site: 17
- Two Schools/Two Sites: 8
- One School/Two Sites: 0

These results taken at various times show clear preference for the Two Schools/One Site concept. Its primary advantages are:

- Locates all high school programs and services on a single campus to increase student opportunity, choice, and convenience
- Maintains Pittsfield’s traditional “two school” identity
- Maintains current number of athletics teams, student service and leadership opportunities, and extra curricular activity opportunities
- Eases facilities operations, and may reduce overall operational costs

Planning Options relating the organizational concepts to current facilities were developed by the architect, and then modified, discussed, and rated and ranked by the Futures Team. See Educational Vision for details.

These evaluations resulted in unanimous support for one site, and strong support for two schools on that site.

## EDUCATIONAL VISION

The Educational Vision component of this document represents critical thinking by school and community members about the nature of high school education in

Pittsfield, the possibilities for the future, and the implications for building planning and design. The process and Vision outlined here were developed in close coordination with Dore and Whittier Architects who developed the Futures Team’s school organizational concepts as planning concepts applied to the existing school sites.

## FUTURES TEAM

Development of this Vision and Master Plan required the concentrated effort of a dedicated group of educators, students, and community members who worked together in the fall of 2007 to create a concept of high school to meet the goals of this study.

The Futures Team broadly and effectively considered the nature of learning, effective educational delivery, educational successes within the schools, and the synergy of cooperation and opportunity between the high school and the career-tech school, and between the schools and the community.

The Vision presented here is innovative and heart-felt. It is a Vision specific to Pittsfield, its high school students, and the community. As such it incorporates the values and beliefs of committed Futures Team members representing various levels of community.

Hopefully, it will serve to define the essence and nature of future-oriented high school education, and will be an important step in improving high school education by increasing educational opportunities for young adults and making more relevant connections to adult community members.

## PROCESS

The process to create this Educational Vision and Master Plan focused on effective learning and appropriate school concepts. It examined a range of existing and future educational issues including expected student outcomes, how people learn, the relationship of learning to teaching, and school organizational structure.

The Futures Team was intentionally diverse, and included teachers, administrators, students, and community members. More than 35 people met for five, day-long sessions.

The Visioning process utilized an intense workshop format with facilitated group challenges. Team members worked in small teams of six to twelve people, in whole group sessions, and as individuals to respond to challenges presented by DeJONG.LOCKER.

Specifics of the process:

### August-September 2007:

- Meetings with school and district administrators to plan the process and review critical issues

### September:

- Call for volunteers for Futures Team

### October:

- Two days of workshops initiate the Visioning and Master Planning process. Focus on Pittsfield high schools' "self portrait" and effective teaching and learning

### November:

- Two days of workshops continue the Visioning and Master Planning process. Focus on defining school

### December:

- Final day of workshops concludes the Visioning and Master Planning process. Focus on developing and reviewing facilities Options

### TBD:

- Presentation to School Board

## WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL WILL THIS BE?

The Futures Team used the Progression of School Development (Copyright 2006 Frank Locker Inc.) to evaluate both PHS and THS educational delivery and facilities today, and to project the desired future of high school education delivery and facilities.

The Progression recognizes the evolutionary shift in education. Schools today are in different points of evolution, and different schools expect to be in different points of evolution in the long term future.

The Futures Team scored education and facilities today, and the desired future. The results averaging both schools are shown in the chart on the right.

The Progression characterizes schools and facilities on a 1 through 5 basis, with 1 as the most traditional category, and 5 as the most transformed. The full Progression of School Development follows.

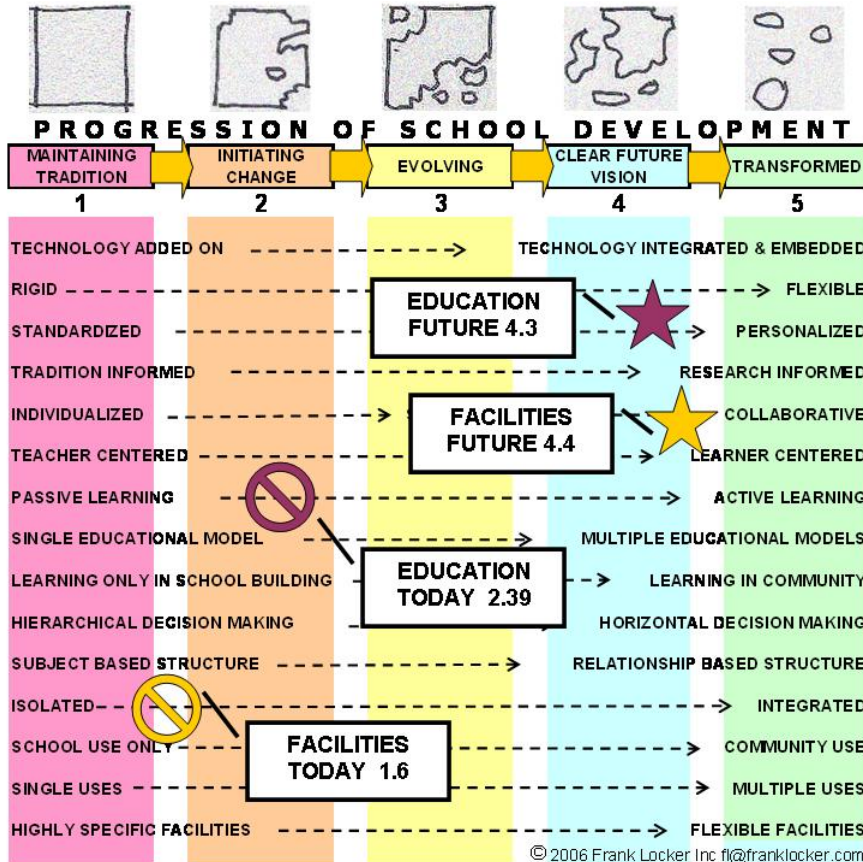
Futures Team members reviewed the Progression and voted by secret ballot. The average of the scores of individual Futures Team members is:

**Education Today 2.39**

**Education Future 4.3**

**Facilities Today 1.6**

**Facilities Future 4.4**



These scores indicate:

- Existing educational organization and delivery models are traditional
- Existing facilities do not accommodate the existing educational delivery model very well
- The future of educational organization and delivery is to be highly transformed
- Existing facilities are incapable of accommodating this future educational vision very easily.
- Future facilities need to both accommodate the future educational vision, and also be capable of adapting to educational organizational and delivery models not yet developed.

Implications of these shifts for facilities planning include the following:

- Learning spaces (Classrooms, Labs, Small Group Rooms) with connections to each other (doors, folding walls) to facilitate larger group sizes, team teaching, cooperative student learning, and project learning with students in adjacent rooms.
- Learning spaces strategically arranged in the building to facilitate interdisciplinary teaching. This includes career-tech to academic integration, as well as interdisciplinary teaching within the academic learning areas
- Wireless technology and portable devices with network access for all teachers and students to allow information access and student work anywhere in the building
- Teacher Planning Centers strategically located to foster interdepartmental communication

- Modular sizing, componentized furniture, appropriate equipment and technology to add flexibility in reassignment of spaces as programs change