Finding Space: Educational Reforms in Practice in an Urban Public School

By

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The City University of New York

2008

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the
Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the
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Abstract

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This dissertation analyzes Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS) and its positioning as an innovative educational institution at the forefront of a movement to change the structure of education. CPESS has been considered by supporters to be an example of a school which has the potential to create social change. However, despite wide acclaim in the ten years after its founding, the school began to decline in 1995.

Through the use of survey and interview methods with former CPESS students, teachers and administrators who were present during the first ten years of the school, the research demonstrated that CPESS was effective by some measures and not by others. The students of the school—mostly low-income, urban and minority students—applied to, were accepted and attended colleges at higher rates than similar students nationwide. However, perhaps unlike their traditional school counterparts, they seemed to struggle more in lecture courses that emphasized standardized tests and memorization.

Overall, much of the decline of CPESS can be attributed to external forces. Changes in educational policy as well as the availability of educational resources posed a serious threat to CPESS. Positive changes such as the

spread of alternative schools had the latent dysfunction of recruiting away much of the leadership of the school—teachers, administrators, students and parents. CPESS, and the movement it created, played a major role in the transformation of the educational landscape to include small and alternative schools, particularly in urban areas.

In addition to its application to the sociology of education, this framework is significant because the process that the CPESS organization went through is not uncommon. Similar to the way in which the CPESS organization experienced dispersion as a result of its own success, other organizational structures have undergone similar disintegrations and eventually produced strong social movements and organizations that have outlived their parent organizations. This study both addresses questions about alternative education and suggests methodological approaches for analysis of organizations and movements.

Acknowledgements

Research such as this, though undertaken individually, often includes the efforts of others. This work could not have been completed without the assistance of those both within and outside the academy. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Julia Wrigley, who generously gave her time to meetings, emails, advice and suggestions that kept me on the right track, particularly during the final phases of the dissertation process. I am also very grateful to my dissertation committee members Paul Attewell and Juan Battle for their suggestions and assistance in organizing and completing this work. Rati Kashyap and Urania Wills were also extremely helpful in assisting my process through graduate school.

My dissertation writing group and friends—Nikisha Williams and Angelique Harris—worked closely with me during the creation of this work, reading, commenting and helping to edit as well as providing much needed social support. Additionally, I would like to thank all of those who have read and commented on this and previous incarnations of my work, especially Tracy Chu, Martine Hackett, Colin Jerolmack, Jay Pastrana and H. Alexander Welcome.

I would not have been able to conduct the research without the help of the organizations that funded my dissertation pursuits: The CUNY Graduate Center and its Office of Educational Opportunity and Diversity Programs and Doctoral Students' Council, as well as the Spencer Foundation and the Coalition of Essential Schools.

My dissertation data relied on cooperation from former students, faculty and staff of Central Park East Secondary School and I am very grateful to them for participating. In particular, Deborah Meier allowed me several interviews and provided valuable information about her experience in CPESS..

Finally, thanks to my family and friends, even those who just pretended to be interested in what I had to say. My parents Jarvis Tyner, Lydia Bassett, Manning Marable and Leith Mullings all encouraged me in many ways. I particularly thank my mother whose help has been invaluable, encouraging me to do my best work and using her own experience to improve mine. I thank my brothers Michael and Colby Tyner—especially Michael who read and participated in discussion with me about the dissertation—and my friends, Johanna Cepin, Ivonne Garcia, Emily Gillette, Daniel Mani and Jacques Montemoiño who knew when to leave me alone, when to drag me out and when I needed help.

Thank you, any success belongs to us all.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the summer of 2007, New York City School's Chancellor, Joel I. Klein unveiled a new plan to motivate low-income students. He proposed to pay students for passing the standardized tests they were otherwise required to take over the course of the year. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Klein reported, "there are lots of kids who think education is not relevant to them, who think education is a waste of time." The paper added: "no one has figured out how to get more poor children engaged in learning. Trumpeting the long-term benefits of education, the better jobs and lives well lived has not worked. Cash just might (Berger 2007)." The plan was to go into effect in several city schools serving low-income students with the intention of providing some motivation for students to succeed.[1] Implicit in this initiative was the belief that students, specifically those in low-income neighborhoods and schools, did not perceive education as currently or potentially improving their lives.

The view that education does not fundamentally transform the lives of individuals is not limited to low income and minority students. It has been expressed by academics and educators on different sides of the debates about the politics of education. They differ on why education has not produced mobility for disadvantaged groups and the implications of this failure for social policy.

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[1] Educational stipends have been implemented in other countries such as Brazil and Mexico. However, in Mexico, for example, the stipend is addressed not to motivation, but to compensating the family for the students' inability to work while in school (Smith 2000).

Experts disagree about general policies: which schools should be funded, the unit of analysis used to measure the problem, and what plans should be pursued.

Conservative pundits, academics, and educators tend to explain that mobility is not achieved through education because of a lack of proper socialization of students and their families or because of the cultural context in which students and their families find themselves. Though policies such as Klein's incentive-based education do not necessarily address these complaints, they follow from the idea that students make conscious choices not to work in school because they see no reward in doing so. While Klein believes students' lack of motivation has a solution—paying students for their effort—for conservative theorists, the same problem suggests that maintaining or increasing funding for schools in low-income neighborhoods will make no positive difference.

On the other hand, progressive educators focus more on macroeconomic structures and policies. Agreeing that many schools have not made good on their promises to provide the conditions for social mobility and equality for all citizens, progressive educators fault larger social institutions. The lack of quality jobs, the high rate of crime, and housing and employment discrimination are only a few of the problems low-income students face outside of the school. Jean Anyon (1997) asserts that local, state and national policies must be enacted to make changes outside of the schools so that changes can be made within them. "Attempting to fix inner-city schools without fixing the city in which they are embedded is like trying to clean the air on one side of a screen door (Anyon 1997:168)." Though it

is clearly the case that education alone cannot correct longstanding injustices, it is possible for schools to play a role in creating a space for the students who pass though their doors to effect social change. I will explore this possibility through an analysis of Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS)—a New York City public alternative school that served primarily low-income and minority students.

I analyze CPESS and its role as an innovative educational institution at the forefront of a movement to change the structure of education because it is a strategic research site (Merton 1987) through which it is possible to examine the relationship between the school and other institutions. Furthermore, I am specifically interested in how schools and those other institutions interact to affect inequality, education and education policy. One of my central interests in the study of this alternative school is its effects on minority students: the majority of New York City's public school population is black and Latino (in 2006, 36.7 percent were Hispanic and 34.7 percent were black (Gootman 2006)). Though there are schools with similar models in other cities, one of the explicit goals of CPESS administrators was to address race and class inequalities through an innovative alternative schooling model. CPESS represented a response to controversies about education and social mobility, especially for African Americans and other minority groups, that has its roots in the history of public education and the ensuing debates about education, citizenship, mobility and school reform.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Prior to the 1800s and mandatory schooling laws, class and race constrained access to schooling, limiting it to those who were privileged (Ravitch 2000; Tyack 1974). It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that educational reformers established a common school system designed to provide free elementary school education across the country and open to all students—a sharp contrast to the religious schools that had previously been the norm (Shuford 2007).

In New York, the Manumission Society founded a non-religious school in 1787 to educate the children of blacks in the North (Ravitch 1974). For enslaved Africans and African Americans, however, education was illegal in many states. For example, as late as the 1830s, North Carolina state law proclaimed:

> Whereas the teaching of slaves to read and write, has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion, to the manifest injury of the citizens of the State: Therefore, be it enacted …That any free person, who shall hereby teach, or attempt to teach, any slave within the State to read or write…shall be liable to indictment in any court of record in this State having jurisdiction thereof… (Marable and Mullings 2000:41).

This law reflected not only unequal access to education but also the fear that education would "produce rebellion" in the mind of the slave, thereby undermining the slave system and the national structure. Despite this, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, some northern states maintained schools for freed or runaway slaves.

For newly freed African Americans, education was widely seen as a way out of poverty. The direction that such education should take, however, was highly contested. Though Booker T. Washington embraced vocational education for African Americans, W.E.B. DuBois advocated for the range of educational experiences enjoyed by white students (Washington 1895; DuBois 1989[1903]). The debate between Washington and DuBois, in many ways, reflected disagreements in broader society about the role of education not only for African Americans but also for immigrants and the poor.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the migration of blacks from the south and the immigration of Puerto Ricans exponentially expanded the minority population in northern urban areas like New York City (Ravitch 1974). These students generally found themselves in segregated schools with inexperienced teachers and out-of-date materials. The famous 1954 court case, *Oliver Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.,* led to the end of *de jure* segregation in schools. It did not, however, guarantee that students would attend integrated institutions. The next thirty years in New York were rife with dissent and protest about education, desegregation and community control.

One proposed policy to promote school desegregation in the city was to create junior high schools, dividing education into schools of four years each—four years in elementary school, four in junior high and four in high school. The assumption was that if these new junior high schools were built in black neighborhoods, integration would be inevitable. Parents would have a limited

number of schools to which to send their children, and, by default, black and white students would attend schools together (Ravitch 2000).

Another proposed solution to segregation in the New York City School system was the implementation of community school districts. In 1968, the question of who would control the schools erupted in a school boycott in Oceanhill-Brownsville, Brooklyn that pitted the predominantly white teachers union against the black and Latino New York City public school students and parents. In 1969, The New York City Board of Education decentralized its system, dividing the elementary schools into 30 community school districts and high school divisions. This ostensibly gave local communities the ability to make the changes to their schools that would most benefit their particular populations (Rogers and Chung 1983). Schools in New York, and in the northern states in general, however, never reached the level of integration of many southern schools (Kozol 2005), and minority and low-income students have continued to under-perform in comparison to white and middle-class students (Jencks and Phillips 1998).

Those who founded and supported Central Park East Secondary School intended to redress some of these issues by creating a school with a diverse population and alternative pedagogical methods. Although the majority of the students at CPESS were black and Latino, by attracting students from across the city, the school overcame some of the residential segregation issues that plague most city schools. As compared to the majority of other public high schools

serving minority and low-income students, the school also had higher graduation and college acceptance and attendance rates.

Research analyzing the disparity between minority and low-income students and the majority population expanded in the 1960s and continues today. Throughout the development of universal education and its reform movements, the question of whether education or educational reforms can facilitate mobility and other societal changes has been either implicit or explicit in most research. Studies have addressed the causes of educational failure, what can be done about it, and whether education can advance social mobility and equal opportunity.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

There are a range of theories seeking to explain why education has not led to social mobility for some groups. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is useful to categorize them according to how they understand the relative significance of culture (or cultural deprivation) and macro-structural issues. Similar to other scholarly inquiries into how racial inequality is produced, explanations for racial disparities in educational achievement tend to divide into those that see culture—be it individual, family or group—or structural constraints as primary.[2]

Cultural explanations often center on aspects of the culture of minorities and low income people. John Ogbu and Signithia Fordam have

[2] There have also been those studies which place the cause of the disparities in genetics. These studies of the biological sources of inequality have been repeatedly disproved and will not be discussed here.

produced well-known examples of this focus on individual or group culture. Based on their fieldwork, they conclude that black students are faced with "the conflict inherent in the unique relationship of black people with the dominant institution: the struggle to achieve success while retaining group support and approval" (Ogbu and Fordham 1986). Obgu's thesis, often referred to as "the burden of acting white" posits that black students underachieve because of the stigma they face embracing the norms, which in this case is productive participation in schools, of the dominant group. Other studies present various aspects of cultural deprivation (Hunt 1969; Deutch 1967).

Emphasis on issues such as a poor work ethic, weak family values, an "ethic of dependency" on state supported assistance, and a lack of long-term planning (Ortiz and Briggs 2003, Jones and Luo 1999) minimize the structural sources of inequality and easily shade into a "culture of poverty" perspective. Based on research in low-income communities in Puerto Rico, Mexico and New York, Oscar Lewis (1966) described a "culture of poverty" in which poor people are trapped, that produces conditions where after the age of four or five, regardless of changes in the environment, individuals are unable to change their behavior. This conclusion would preclude the investment of funds into poverty areas for basic social infrastructure such as neighborhood schools, commercial areas, parks, or housing.

The Moynihan Report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965), named for its author, former New York Senator Daniel Patrick

Moynihan, is an example of this type of reasoning. According to Moynihan, the African American family, marked by the prevalence of female-headed households, shows “an unmistakable influence” on the underachievement, dropout rates, and general “pathology” of the African American community. In contrast, Juan Battle and others have demonstrated that the effect of family structure on education and cognitive ability varies and can be influenced by additional variables such as income, mother’s mental health, and multi-generational households (Battle 1997; Ginther and Pollak 2004; Carlson and Corcoran 2001, Deleire and Kalil 2002). For example, Battle found that among African American families at lower SES levels, students with divorced parents “scored significantly higher on standardized achievement tests than did their counterparts from married households” (Battle 1997:37).

Other researchers emphasize the role of macro-structural elements—the larger social context in which the school is found. *Ghetto Schooling* (1997) by Jean Anyon is a good example of this approach. Anyon describes the corruption in Newark, New Jersey’s school system and the ways in which the consequences of this trickled down to students in the classroom. In later work, she argues that governmental policy can have devastating effects on a school’s ability to effect change. She asserts “macroeconomic policies like those regulating the minimum wage, job availability, tax rates, federal transportation, and affordable housing create conditions in cities that no existing educational policy or urban school reform can transcend” (2005:2).

These studies reflect larger debates about the fundamental purpose of schooling. Conflict theorists assert that it is the function of educational institutions to reproduce the class structure. Educational institutions embody the interests of the dominant group and function to create and reproduce inequality. Rather than "the Enlightenment's concept of citizenship [where] students are….encouraged to engage in independent, critical thinking…children of the working and professional and middle classes are to be molded to the industrial and technological imperatives of contemporary society" (Aronowitz 2004). Pierre Bourdieu famously describes this process as cultural reproduction. Class structures are reinforced in schools through the relationships between teachers and their students and through the behaviors and knowledge that are promoted and those which are punished (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

Similarly, Eleanor Leacock analyzed the ways in which racial inequality is reproduced in New York City schools. She observed that

> Teachers define goals for children directly when they teach and set up rules for classroom behavior. Further, they establish goals for behavior indirectly when they praise, punish, or ignore different acts. The influence they exert on children is particularly strong, not only because the amount of time children spend with them is considerable, but also because their sanctions receive powerful reinforcement from a child's point of view due to the fact that they are applied before the watchful eyes of age-mates (1969:116).

Though Leacock does not use the language of social and cultural reproduction, she concludes that schools serve to reproduce the stratification structure of the society.

Recent empirical studies examining the potential of schools to affect social mobility have yielded mixed results. The classic studies of Coleman et

al. and Jencks et al are generally the point of reference for current research on schools and mobility. The 1966 document, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, more popularly known as The Coleman Report, concluded that

> For most minority groups…and most particularly the Negro, schools provide little opportunity for them to overcome [their] initial deficiency; in fact they fall farther behind the white majority in the development of several skills which are critical to making a living and participating fully in modern society. Whatever may be the combination of nonschool factors—poverty, community attitudes, low educational level of parents which put minority children at a disadvantage in verbal and non verbal skills when they enter the first grade, the fact is that the schools have not overcome it (Coleman et al 1966:161).

Therefore, regardless of reforms, schools are unable to prepare students adequately in ways that would allow them to overcome the inequalities they experience outside the school.

Following Coleman's research, Christopher Jencks et al published a study in 1972 which opened with the contention that "schools have rather modest effects on the degree of cognitive and noncognitive inequality among adults" (Jencks et al 1972). The researchers eventually concluded that they could find no convincing evidence that racial desegregation affects educational attainment, but they warned that their results were not "all-embracing."

There is also research, however, that supports the potential of schools to produce significant changes in students' later lives. Doris Entwistle found that both Head Start and high schools can "reduce the effects of social inequality on students' later school success" (Entwisle, Alexander and Olson 1997). In addition, recent research has led Jencks to modify his earlier

conclusions. He explains that in 1966, “school resources had little impact on achievement. Since 1990, however, new statistical methods, new data, and a handful of genuine experiments have suggested that additional resources may in fact have sizable effects on student achievement (Jencks et al. 1998:323).”

Paul Attewell and David Lavin investigated the long term effects of educational attainment in their study of former students of the City University of New York. They found that “if a mother goes to college, and especially if she earns a B.A., her child’s chances of educational success receive a significant boost (2007:80).” Furthermore “those who go further in higher education are more likely to hold jobs that are more rewarded in terms of earnings and other material benefits (55).” Therefore, if students can get to college, there can be significant economic rewards not only for them but also for their children. Economic and other pressures, however, condition the ability of students to access and complete higher education. Attewell and Lavin’s study suggests that “stopouts”—students who interrupt their studies—and dropouts from college “have more to do with financial and family pressures and less about student’s academic abilities than critics allow” (184).

Is it possible to intervene in the social reproduction of inequality and can schools be reformed to be instruments of change? Progressive theorists are ambivalent, but somewhat optimistic. Paulo Freire contends that when schooling is properly implemented, when the structure of schooling does not reinforce an adversarial relationship and when curriculums are made relevant

to students, spaces for resistance to the hierarchical structure of society and its institutions can be created. Anyon, too, while arguing that "macroeconomic mandates continually trump urban reform," (2005:2) also suggests that "the disastrous state of the educational systems in urban areas today could provide impetus to organizing a new social movement" (2005:5).

CENTRAL PARK EAST SECONDARY SCHOOL

I will use Central Park East Secondary School as a case study to examine Anyon's contention—shared by faculty, staff, students, parents and other supporters of CPESS—that schools can function as spaces to effect social change. But in addition to effecting social change, CPESS also presented the possibility of improving the individual life chances of its students. It boasted impressive statistics in a poorly performing New York City school system:

> "In 1985, [Deborah] Meier [founded Central Park East Secondary School] with 550 students in grades seven through twelve. More than half of the students qualify for free lunches and the school has twice as many students with learning disabilities as the average New York public school. Despite these challenges, Central Park East has a graduation rate of 90 percent, compared to 55 percent citywide. Even more striking, between 85 and 95 percent of its graduates go on to college" (cited in Chicago Public Schools 2003).

Through the charismatic leadership of Deborah Meier, the founder and first director of the school, and the help of administrators sympathetic to alternative schools, CPESS grew to become an example of quality public education, especially for minority students. The school's popularity led the students to become accustomed to the sight of groups of educators, parents, students and other interested parties touring the classroom and asking them questions. Visitors arrived at the school from across the nation and internationally.

CPESS was an influential educational model in the 1980s and into the 90s as the school graduated its first class in 1991. A search of *The New York Times* archive between 1985 and 2000 reveals 44 articles that refer to CPESS as a model in small school education (*The New York Times* 1985-2000). Media accounts lauded the first graduating class as promising: “Ninety-five percent…went on to college, compared with an 80 percent average in city high schools [which includes specialized and private schools]. Out of 50 students [in the graduating class], 48 went on to college, 46 of them to four-year colleges, most to state universities but some to schools like Columbia University, Brown University, and Smith College” (Chira 1992). In 1994, Frederick Wiseman, known for his documentary of a high school in 1968, *High School,* and its “scenes of rigid authoritarianism,” filmed CPESS in what might be seen as his sequel, *High School II*. His film, described as “a study in social mobility” was aired on PBS as well as having several public screenings that year (James 1994:C14). In addition, the Clinton Administration named the school one of five model urban high schools in 1997 (Sengupta 1997).

Despite these and other successes in the ten years after its founding, CPESS began to decline in 1995. After the departure of Meier, the school confronted the same challenges as other alternative schools currently do—trying to remain popular, effective and alternative in a system promoting more traditional methods. The institution that once developed the premiere alternative pedagogical philosophy—including portfolios of work rather than standardized exams, emphasis on critical thinking, and collaborative education—has

maintained very few, if any, aspects of this alternative approach. To many of its early supporters, the school is now unrecognizable. As the teachers, students and parents who helped to make the school what is was moved on, it became increasingly difficult for those who remained to maintain its alternative structure, and fewer people came to visit the school. It has now, due to various policy, structural and environmental changes, become a marginally successful, if small, traditional school.

The CPESS legacy continues to exist in the schools of the New York Performance Standards Consortium, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and similar small schools across the country. While CPESS was unable to sustain itself, the school began a social movement by creating the framework for alternative educational institutions across the country. The movement that CPESS spawned continues to spread through schools, which have outlived and continue to survive the original institution.

This dissertation will explore and expand on the story of this school. It will also reveal CPESS to be a site through which a variety of intersecting issues can be examined. The case of CPESS can provide information about the interactions of schools and students with their environment and about the future of public education and its ability to promote change. This dissertation pursued these issues by addressing the ways in which the school was alternative or oppositional in its pedagogical philosophy and structure and how it resisted the repressive policies of urban, public school systems.

Also important to this research is an exploration of the extent to which and how the school made changes in the lives and futures of its low-income and minority students. Finally, the ways which the school met its goals of producing particular types of students and the effect of the school on the larger system in which it was embedded will also be examined.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The CPESS population is described in more detail in **Chapter 2.** The chapter also includes a description of the students' path to CPESS and the methods by which surveys and interviews were administered to them, the former teachers, and one administrator of the school.

The creation of the space for CPESS to function within the bureaucratic structure of the New York City school system is discussed in **Chapter 3**. The structure of this alternative school is examined in order to present the unique features—including its pedagogy and philosophy—that characterized Central Park East Secondary School and other schools like it. This chapter begins to explore the school's attempts to transform social relationships outside of the school through innovative approaches to structure within the classroom as well as the potential for an educational social movement.

Chapter 4 considers how the structures described in the previous chapters are utilized by the school to create the three different dimensions of educational resistance practiced in alternative schools—structural, pedagogical and curricular—and to prepare students for active civic involvement. The data in this chapter are structured around Bourdieu's concept of social reproduction

(Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) as well as the work of other progressive educational theorists.

The goals of New York City alternative schools and the ways in which students achieve or fail to achieve them are presented in **Chapter 5**. This chapter is framed by Merton's concept of rebellion, as set forth in his strain theory. The chapter explores the goals of the school—developed through content analysis and interviews—which pertain to education (e.g. graduating from college), personal life (e.g. family and work), and society (e.g. becoming a public intellectual and a citizen of the world). As a whole, this chapter examines how effectively the school met its goals as well as its successes, or lack thereof, in creating students who were prepared to expand their civic engagement beyond the school.

In **Chapter 6,** the dissertation focuses on the process through which CPESS as an organization declined even as the philosophy survived and became the basis of several other small schools in New York City. Those aspects of the school that were unable to survive, and the factors bearing on this, are explored through the lens of organizational sociology. This chapter examines the interaction between the school, the social environment, and the effects of external policies on educational innovations.

Chapter 7 explores the evolution of a social movement committed to the dissemination of the philosophy and practices of CPESS to other institutions. The emergence of the new organizational form—the CPESS alternative school model—is also examined in this chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with a

discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and makes recommendations for future policy.

The **Conclusion** reflects on the use of concepts from organizational sociology and social movement frameworks to analyze the New York City alternative school movement.

Chapter 2

Methods

In order to address the problems posed in the last chapter, I collected data from a variety of sources to examine the origins of the school, its structure and functioning, the students it created, and the future of this school and others like it. These questions required the use of a variety of methodological approaches, including document analysis, surveys and interviews. This type of triangulation[3] is appropriate when one methodological strategy will not adequately address the research questions. The combination of survey data with qualitative interviews facilitated data collection and analysis at the level of the student as well as the institution. I analyzed public documents, including school reports, websites, and media reports. The survey included 78 students, and I conducted open-ended interviews with 21 students, 8 teachers, and one administrator. In addition, I attended several events sponsored by alternative schools in New York City which had historical ties to CPESS.

SITE

Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS) began in 1985 as a joint effort between Deborah Meier and Ted Sizer—two educational innovators—to create a new type of school. CPESS encompasses grades seven through twelve, divided into three divisions—Division 1, Division 2 and the Senior Institute—of two grades each. Deborah Meier, also the long-time principal of the school, is considered to be a founder of the alternative school movement, and CPESS was

[3] Triangulation is the process of using more than one method to gain a more nuanced explanation of a phenomenon (Bickman and Rog 1998).

considered by educators to be the cornerstone of dozens of schools created since and still to be created. As a junior and senior high school, CPESS was a part of two different public school superintendencies. The junior high school (grades seven and eight) was part of District Five in East Harlem, and, because of its alternative status, the high school was a part of the Alternative Superintendency.[4] The alternative schools with which CPESS shared the Alternative Superintendency were predominately adult education programs with older students who had left or been pushed out of other high schools for disciplinary and/or academic reasons.

CPESS POPULATION

Unlike those in most New York City high schools at that time, the students who attended CPESS resided throughout Manhattan and the other boroughs, rather than only in the school's surrounding areas. The school's student demographics resembled the City's public school system where a majority were low-income, black and Latino, but CPESS had a slightly larger middle-class, upper-middle-class and white population than other public schools in New York City (Division of Assessment and Accountability 1996). Approximately half of the spaces in the high school were reserved for those students who had attended the elementary schools in the CPE system —Central Park East I, II or River East (Meier Interview). Graduating classes were between 50 and 60 students.

In 1996, the *Annual School Report* recorded three hundred and forty students at the high school level of CPESS. The school was 5.5 percent white,

[4] New York City elementary and junior high schools are in different districts, depending on their geographical location. New York City high schools are separated by borough.

41.5 percent black, 50 percent Hispanic and 2.9 percent other. According to the *Report*, seventy-seven percent of students were eligible for resource room services, indicating the need for academic assistance outside of the daily classroom services. In addition, 42.5 percent of students received free or reduced fee lunch in 1995, 38.5 percent in 1996 and 37 percent in 1997 (Division of Assessment and Accountability 1996)—eligibility for free lunch is a measure of the low-income population often used in public schools.

The *Report* listed 21 high school level teachers, 90 percent of whom were fully licensed and permanently assigned to the school. Sixty-four percent of the teachers had taught for more than five years and 92 percent had at least a Masters degree (Division of Assessment and Accountability 1996). Approximately 65 percent of teachers were white, 20 percent black, and 10 percent Latino. The staff was 63 percent female.

SAMPLE

I recruited as many former students as possible for the survey and selected students for interviews from those in the survey sample who volunteered to be interviewed (the recruitment methods will be further described in the following section). I composed the sample of students from the first five graduating classes of CPESS because they had been enrolled at CPESS at its origins, its prime, and the beginning of its decline. In addition, scholars and administrators concerned with alternative education have suggested that a temporal distance from their years at the school, and the time to participate in different educational and life experiences, enhances students' assessments of

both the strengths and weaknesses of their educational experience. It was the students' experiences in other schools, college, and the workforce that served to make the goals and methods of CPESS more apparent. My initial database of students, collected through perusal of yearbooks and attendance at reunions, contained the names of 371 members from the first five graduating classes—those who would have graduated between 1991 and 1995—which is slightly higher then the estimate of 70 or fewer students for each of the five classes of graduates.

Of my sample of 78 students who responded to the survey, 63 percent were female; 13 percent were white, 40 percent black and 22 percent Latino. The average age of the former students at the time of the survey was 30.

Seventy-eight percent of students in the final sample reported that while they were in high school, their ZIP code was in Manhattan—neighborhoods which ranged from the Lower East Side (near the southeast end of the island) to Inwood (at the northern tip of the island). The next largest group, 10 percent of the sample, was from the Bronx; and Brooklyn and Queens had 6 percent each. Students traveled to the school by subway, bus or both using free passes provided by the Board of Education (see Appendix B for full data).

Fifty percent of those in the sample entered CPESS after attending another alternative school. Of that group, only 3.8 percent had attended a school outside of the CPE system. The majority of the students began their CPESS educations in the seventh or eighth grade. The age of incoming students varied widely, as CPESS was both a school for students who transferred from other

junior high or high schools, and a school for students directly out of elementary and junior high school. Those former students in the sample who entered CPESS at the junior high school level, entered the school as young as twelve and as old as eighteen; of those entering in ninth or tenth grade, their ages ranged from fourteen to eighteen.

Students came from different household forms. Approximately 30 percent[5] of former students in the sample had lived with both parents during their high school years. Others lived in less traditional family groupings; 39.7 percent lived with their mothers and 6.4 percent with their fathers. The remaining students (23.9 percent) lived with grandparents, other relatives or non-relatives. Most of those in the sample lived in a home with two other people and more than forty percent lived with at least one sibling. A third of students' mothers held a graduate degree[6] as did fifteen percent of fathers. Nearly 50 percent described their family income as working class with about a third describing their income as middle class (see Appendix C for full table).

Students arrived at CPESS through different educational pathways. There was little recruitment from the schools beyond the initial push at the elementary school level to encourage neighborhood students. The majority of students in the interview sample reported that they learned about the school from elementary

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[5] Questions about family composition were added after an initial phase of surveying and as a result a quarter of students did not respond to those questions.

[6] This statistic does raise a question about how representative the sample is or how representative the school is of the New York City public school system. There are a variety of reasons for why this number may have been higher than a city-wide sample, including a large number of middle and upper income students, a lack of understanding of the term, or a lack of a time to answer the question. This will be explored in future research.

school administrators and word of mouth; those who lived in the neighborhood were especially likely to hear about the school.

Teachers at CPESS had typically taught more than one grade level**.** The teacher sample was 63 percent male and 75 percent white. Fifty percent of those in the teacher sample had at some point taught seventh grade, 62 percent taught eighth, ninth and/or tenth and 75 percent had taught eleventh or twelfth grade. The staff had an average age of 53 (when interviewed) and had taught at CPESS for a mean of 11 years. Seventy-five percent of the teachers in the sample currently classified themselves as middle class and the remainder upper middle class.

STUDENT SAMPLE RECRUITMENT

Recruitment of the student sample took place in several waves. Through a school reunion in 2001, contact information was obtained for more than 50 percent of the students in the five target classes. The first wave of recruitment utilized this contact information, as well as information gained from previous contacts with graduates. An email was sent to all available email addresses. This message introduced (or reintroduced) the researcher, explained the project and directed the recipients to the website where the survey could be found. I considered this both a testing phase and a pilot stage and included the data collected at this time with those data obtained at later phases. At this point, I addressed problems with the website and added additional questions to the survey (see Appendix D for more information).

I followed up the initial email a few months later with a second email directed to those who had not responded. In order to ensure as complete an initial database of students as possible, I re-examined yearbooks for the years 1991 to 1995[7] and created new class lists to include students who may have been missing from the initial database.

Following the second wave of emails, I used *Intelus.com*, a computer database that provides 24-hour unlimited access to addresses and phone numbers,[8] and I collected contact information for all of the names on my list. For those names with five or fewer address choices, I added all addresses, as reported by *Intelus.com*, into the database, as well as an indication of whether Intelus.com had confirmed the address by bill payments or other sources.

During the third recruitment wave, I sent another email to each student in the database where email addresses were available. I conducted searches of three online resources. *Classmates.com*—an online collection of names and emails intended for class reunions—was the most accurate as it was organized by school and therefore individuals located on this site were extremely likely to

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[7] CPESS Yearbooks included senior and junior class pictures with students' first and last names. Additionally, each senior was awarded their own half a page to customize. Advisory ("homeroom") pictures for all grades were also included in the yearbook. The yearbooks identified students in these group images only by a first name and last initial, however. I entered yearbook data as follows: for the 1991 yearbook, all students—for a total of six grades—were entered into database. For each following year, the names that were already included in the database were edited (last names were added to those for which only a last initial had been available in a previous yearbook) and new students were added. Therefore, the final list of students complied from the yearbooks does not include students who left before 1991. Students were also added to the database from C*lassmates.com*'s records of the five graduating classes which may account for data from some students who left without being in the yearbook.

[8] I found the database information, which included birthdates for some entries, extremely useful in identifying and distinguishing former students for those with common names.

have attended CPESS. I also performed searches on *Friendster.com* and *Myspace.com*—two sites used for social networking. The names I found through these sites were more likely to be people who simply shared former students' names. I used year of birth as a measure of approximate age, and this became another variable in the searches. Also, some of the sites contained pictures that could be used for identification purposes. I located some former students who listed CPESS as their high school or New York as their hometown on these websites.

Finally, if students were unavailable online, I used residential address information at the end of the fourth wave. I sent students with available contact information survey questionnaires, a pen, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. For students with more than one address, I sent questionnaires to the first confirmed address, the first address in New York, or the first address on the list.

The fifth wave was similar to the third. Instead of sending questionnaires, however, I sent each student a postcard reminding them of the survey that I had previously mailed to them. I mailed a different postcard to unconfirmed addresses requesting participation or confirmation of a wrong address. I also collected contact information from the online white pages and *Yahoo.com*'s people search, which included email addresses.

Finally, the fifth wave utilized a non-random stratified sampling technique (Healey 2002). Chi-square tables were created for each graduating class and those race/gender categories in which there were few or no students, such as

Latino men, were actively pursued by phone, through email, or the United States Postal Service. Former students' communications with each other added a snowball aspect to the process; ten percent[9] of students were directed to the survey by someone other than me.

I also provided former students with an incentive to participate by entering completed surveys in a raffle for two MP3 players, and I offered all participants a copy of the results and an entry in a directory upon completion of the research.

At the end of the survey, I asked students if they would consent to being interviewed. Initially, I sent invitations for interviews to all who expressed interest. In later iterations, I selected respondents based on demographic and attitudinal survey responses to gather as diverse a sample as possible. I contacted respondents for interviews based on their schedules and at locations of their choosing.

TEACHER SAMPLE RECRUITMENT

I used a different approach to recruit teachers by creating a database that included the names of teachers cited in the yearbooks, mentioned by reunion contacts or in students' surveys and interviews. I emailed teachers with email addresses listed in the reunion information and used online resources such as *google.com* and *whitepages.com* to find where former teachers were employed and/or their home contact information. I then sent them letters or called to make appointments for interviews. Teachers also contacted each other to expedite the process.

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[9] Again, this question was added in a later phase. Forty-seven percent of former students did not respond to this question.

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

Care was taken to protect the subjects of this research through the use of pseudonyms as agreed upon in my Institutional Review Board (IRB) contract, as well as survey and interview consent forms. I could not protect the anonymity of the administrator, however, because of her position, and the IRB required special consent forms and permission from that individual.

STUDENT SURVEY

Previous research on alternative schools has relied primarily on open-ended questions and interviews. Though this is a valid option, in order to attempt to obtain a higher response rate than previous studies (Fowler 2002), this research included structured survey questions, as well as open-ended questions and interviews. Though the use of surveys may sacrifice the inclusion of alternative responses, Fowler (1995) notes that questions which require respondents to choose between finite choices are often more likely to achieve survey goals.

Because of my interest in educational and occupational outcomes for a diverse population, survey methods were appropriate for this project. To examine the school and its student body, as a whole, aggregate data from a larger population was important. This level of coverage would have been difficult through the use of only qualitative methods.

The accessibility of an online survey format also assisted in creating a larger group of respondents than might have been obtained otherwise. Respondents had access to the survey wherever they had access to a computer

and could complete it on their own schedule. Computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI) also saved researcher time and increased response accuracy as data collection and entry occurred simultaneously. Moreover, a computer can more easily perform complicated skip procedures and can use previous information to clarify later questions (Bickman and Rog 1998; Fowler 2002; Saris 1991). In addition to the online version, respondents had the option of receiving the survey through the mail (USPS or e-mail) or by telephone. I identified each administration type by a unique code. The completion time of the survey ranged from twenty to forty minutes.

Instrument

I created the survey instrument initially to address the question of how well alternative school students fared by traditional measures (such as college attendance and graduation, degrees, and income levels), as well as alternative measures (including civic engagement, values, and professions). The purpose of the survey changed slightly during the analysis as the theoretical framework was expanded to incorporate a greater number of traditional educational outcomes. This allowed for a focus on the particular goals of the school as an organization and whether the students' experiences suggested that the school effectively met its goals. I aligned many of the original questions with this new emphasis and added questions to demonstrate effectiveness or lack thereof.

The survey incorporated questioning models from a few different sources as well as questions and models of my own design. The instrument asked the former students questions about their experience in education and their current

life experiences. Questions on their attitudes and participation in CPESS measured their engagement in high school (as well as the available activities at the school). I also included in the survey questions about choices made to graduate from high school and attend college and students' attitudes and participation in and after college.

Questions used in several studies of civic and student engagement were combined and edited in order to measure civic engagement in high school, college and afterwards (Indiana University School of Education National Survey of Student Engagement 2005; University of California Student Information Form 2005; Indiana University School of Education The High School Survey of Student Engagement 2005; Indiana University School of Education College Student Expectations Questionnaire 1999; Cornell University College Student Experiences Questionnaire 1998; University of California College Student Survey 2005-2006). These variables included lists of civic and academic activities. The instrument included social engagement variables—such as visiting friends and going to the movies—so as not to bias survey responses toward or against civic engagement. I treated variables concerning the values of former students similarly. Applying previously utilized models offered an opportunity not only to use pre-tested variables but also to have an existing dataset against which to compare collected data. I adapted the last group of variables in the survey from a master's thesis by Rebecca Waltzer about another alternative school. Waltzer's (1998) research on Urban Academy students used a measure of skills that she and other teachers at the school hypothesized students might have learned at

the school—such as discussion, essay writing and critical thinking. I added more traditional skill sets to the list of potential skills in order to capture the success rate of the particular goals that interested alternative school educators, as well as those that many educators believe should be found in all schools.

The instrument appeared in three forms. There was a paper version of the survey, a digital version that could be transmitted by email, and survey respondents could also fill out the survey at a website. I programmed the online version of the survey using PHP and a MySQL[10] database, which allowed me a creative and flexible use of format and structure for the survey. I used branching, for example, to permit students who did not go to college to skip questions pertaining to college experiences. The website also allowed previous responses—names of colleges, for example—to be used in a later question about college major and degrees (see Appendix E for sample questions)

Analysis

While demographic descriptions of data are perhaps not sophisticated enough to be considered as analysis,[11] uni-variate statistical descriptions are important to this research. I analyzed demographic concerns such as the number of students who graduated from college or entered certain professions to determine the extent to which CPESS worked effectively as an organization and, in conjunction with other data, to provide insight into how well the school met its goals. Bivariately, the demographic statistics on the different groups within the

[10] PHP is a programming language used on web pages with form elements to communicate with a database. MySQL is the database-type most commonly used with web pages.

[11] This dissertation does not include statistical hypothesis testing.

school were also important in ensuring representation from a variety of racial, gender and educational and occupational categories.

STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Qualitative methods serve a variety of purposes and interview methods are useful in discovering "unanticipated phenomen[a]" (Maxwell 1998:69). While I undertook this research with specific questions in mind, given the complexity of the school and the diversity of its population, the methodological approach had to allow for the emergence of additional data. An interpretation of internal processes and the transformation of the school would not have been possible without the more nuanced data interviews provided. The interviews also provided a context for the general outcomes indicated by the survey methods.

Sample

After completing their survey, each respondent chose whether or not to participate in an interview. Therefore, the interview sampling frame was created from a voluntary, convenience sample. This approach was useful because the population of students who decided to complete the interview had already spent some time reflecting on their school and work experiences. I chose respondents, selected from among those who agreed to be interviewed, with reference to certain themes that emerged over the course of the survey research. In order to allow for the study of a range of experiences, the interview sample included distinct categories of respondents. Initial categories included those who expressed negative feelings about the school in their survey responses and those who did not, and those who graduated and/or attended college and those

who did not. After examining survey responses and conducting a few interviews, other categories emerged such as those who did not graduate on time, those who participated in athletics, and those who entered different occupational groups. Twenty-one student interviews were administered between February and December 2006.

Instrument

The student interviews required former students to delve more deeply into their educational processes, what the school meant to them, and how they assessed their own achievement in education and work (see Appendix F for sample interview questions). Each interview took approximately an hour and a half[12] and was recorded with the respondent's permission. To obtain valuable descriptive and reasoning information from the respondents the interview process used open-ended questions that addressed students' experiences and how they assessed their education and its role in their lives in order (Fowler 1995).

There were also more specific questions that referred to students' survey responses. For example, if a student stated that she worked at a publishing house, I asked "You said that you work as an editor. Why do you think that is a good fit for you?" The interview included very broad questions, such as "How do you define success?", which required the respondent apply her own interpretation, as well as very specific questions, such as "Would you send your children to CPESS as it was when you were there?", where the former student

[12] As this depended very much on the depth of the respondent's answers, interviews were as short as 40 minutes and as long as four hours.

was expected to respond to particular aspects of her school, work or life experiences.

Analysis

I transcribed and then analyzed the interviews using Atlas, a coding program used to organize qualitative data. As I reviewed interviews, themes emerged that I organized into 142 codes. I selected themes according to their prevalence across interviews, as well as the extent to which they addressed the research questions. I searched interviews for data concerning themes such as school limitations, student skills—gained or lacking—and global perspective as well as traditional and non-traditional measures of success (see Appendix G for sample list of codes).

TEACHER INTERVIEWS

In order to expand and contextualize the data about the goals and outcomes of the school, I interviewed eight former CPESS teachers and a former administrator, the founder of the school. Beyond the obvious importance of interviewing the founder, the opinions of teachers who supported and participated in the endeavor were also essential. Teachers mentioned in the students' survey responses were selected and were recruited according to their willingness and availability. I conducted interviews with those teachers who were specifically described as having either negative or positive effects on their students. I also made an effort to ensure representation based on gender, race, academic subject and grade taught. I contacted three administrators but only one was available to be interviewed for inclusion in this dissertation. The interviews

were semi-structured, allowing the teachers and principal to explain the school's goals, their place in achieving those goals, and the extent to which they felt they had met the goals. I also asked teachers about how the school functioned and what types of changes they observed over the course of their tenure at the CPESS (see Appendix H for sample questions).

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

I used a simplified form of content analysis to assess the public persona of the school. Content analysis, a method for objectively examining documents by use of a coding scheme (Taylor 2003), added additional context to the interview and survey data. Public documents present the official goals of the school as an organization and demonstrate how members of the school community choose to present themselves.

Every year, the Division of Assessment and Accountability (DAA), a division of the New York City Department of Education, produces a report card (see Appendix I for example) for every school in the city. As an introduction to the statistical information about the schools, each school's report begins with a mission statement and a statement from the current principal. These provide information about how alternative schools visualize their purpose and the qualities of the students they produce—their official goals. Both the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) and the New York Performance Standards Consortium (NYPSC) also have websites[13] with similar, goal-related information on their schools. These sources were examined for each of the schools listed in the

[13] www.essentalschools.com and www.performanceassessment.com.

NYPSC. This familiarized me with the goals of a range of New York alternative schools and provided a context within which to analyze the goals of CPESS. Because these schools, including CPESS, have changed over time, it was important to gather information from all the schools as it is more likely to represent goals of alternative schools as a whole and the initial intentions of the CPESS staff as they were when respondents attended the school.

Content analysis began with a predefined set of concepts at the level of words and phrases (no more than five words). These concepts were represented by words such as *democracy* and *community* and phrases like *life-long learner*. The sources— two websites and the annual report cards—included a total of 24 documents, each containing one to three paragraphs. I examined the sources for the above concepts (Carley 1993; Esslinger and Green 1971; Mitchell 1967). I selected additional concepts from the text depending on their emphasis within the text and their proximity to the predefined concepts such as *goals*, *outcomes*, *mission* and *purpose*. I used the results of the content analysis in the creation of the survey and both interview instruments. It also informed the analysis of those data and the creation of the units of analysis for this dissertation.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Archival research also included a search for relevant articles published in *The New York Times* from 1974, shortly before Central Park East elementary school was created, to the year 2000. I also consulted supplementary websites—such as *insideschools.org*—containing information on New York public schools. Members of the faculty and staff at several alternative schools were aware of my

research, and they gave me the text of speeches and other internally produced documents when they encountered me at various events.

During the course of my interviews, some respondents volunteered written information such as evaluations, letters, pictures and videos. I have not individually attributed this information but used it, where necessary, to provide a more nuanced description of the goals, structure and eventual dissolution of CPESS.

INSIDE/OUTSIDE

In ethnography, practitioners often allude to the insider/outsider perspective or status (Naples 1996). This refers to the status of the researcher and research subjects in reference to the group being researched and the distinct viewpoints this generates—each with its own strengths and weaknesses and each with a distinct contribution to the research. As an insider, one may be privy to particular information or confidences. As an outsider, however, a researcher may be trusted as someone who will not judge or share information with other insiders. Ethnographic researchers question what it means to cross that line. While this research is not ethnographic in nature, these concerns are still relevant. It is important to explain how I, as a researcher, was positioned.

As a graduate of Central Park East Secondary School, I enjoy status as insider who spent six years in the school as a member of the class of 1994. Some of my data on the structure of the school are derived from my observations of the school from the perspective of a student. I have tried, where applicable, to support this information with data from interviews and previous research on the

school. My insider status also facilitated my recruitment of respondents. According to teachers and former students, the fact that I was an alumna of the school generated trust and encouraged the view that I and my research were legitimate.

That I was privy to insider knowledge added ease to interviewing. Respondents could use terms such as “advisory”, “portfolios” and “humanities” without having to explain what they meant. They could speak freely about their experiences and not be restricted by my level of knowledge.

I also have an outsider status. As a member of the class of 1994, I remain an outsider to the other graduating classes,[14] and while some respondents from these classes remembered me, many did not. Several students began their responses with “I don’t know if it was like this when you were there…” and “things might have changed later but…” placing me in the role of outsider.

I also played both roles as I interviewed teachers and administrators. Because I had never taught at CPESS, I was an outsider to their occupational position. Nonetheless, I did have some knowledge of their experiences, having taught at one of the high schools that used the CPESS model. I believe that my position as a former student of the school also facilitated my relationships with teachers and administrators. They seemed to transfer a level of trust shared by members of the CPESS community to me as a researcher. The CPESS faculty and staff appeared to be very open and honest, sharing stories and observations

[14] Since the school utilized heterogeneous groupings, I shared classes with both the class of 1995 and the class of 1993.

with me that seemed to demonstrate their belief in my trustworthiness and the importance of the research.

Nancy A. Naples (1996) notes that the insider/outsider debate is more fluid than a simple dichotomy. Researchers and respondents can take on multiple, changing roles depending on whom they are speaking to and which perspective they might embrace in that interaction. Blurring the line between the two, Naples suggests that no one can fully embrace the role of insider or outsider. In the course of this research project, both respondents and researcher seemed to shift between insider and outsider. Overall, I think that my role as insider facilitated my recruitment while my role as outsider encouraged a certain level of elaboration among my respondents.

I am aware that my position as both insider and outsider could potentially lead to bias. The nature of the project tends to engender strong feelings either in support of or against the school. Recognizing my positionality, however, forced me to be aware of and control for my biases while presenting multiple viewpoints, many of which differ from my own.

The survey allowed me to capture the distinct viewpoints and experiences of a large group of people while the interviews provided an opportunity to explore those differences. This approach incorporates both macro and micro levels of analysis, and both methods were necessary. The following chapter begins at the macro level, positioning CPESS in the larger history of school reform and the contestation over the goals of education at both national and local levels.

Chapter 3

Alternative Roots

The Emergence and Structure of the Alternative School

Despite the recent Broad Foundation prize for Urban Education—awarded to the New York City Department of Education because of its "significant gains in academic achievement, particularly among disadvantaged students "(Ramirez 2007:42)—New York City's school system has historically been "in crisis." Jean Anyon notes that crises in school systems, like those that have plagued New York since the 1890s, both reveal and are caused by crises outside the realm of education (Anyon 2005; Ravich 1974). The sheer amount of research, the rancorous debates and the struggles for control of New York City's public schools indicate the importance different interest groups place on public education.

For example, African Americans and other minorities have held strongly to the belief that education is a path to power. They have confronted educational and governmental policies that have denied them access to the same type of education available to more privileged students. The founders, administrators and teachers of CPESS consciously saw themselves as democratizing education, providing, as Deborah Meier was fond of saying, an equivalent education to that available in private schools. Through interview data and document analysis, the following two chapters describe the emergence and development of Central Park East Secondary School and the educational reforms that were instituted despite the policies and structures of the larger system.

THE SPACE TO START…

As an untested idea promising education reform for low-income students, the emergence of the CPE schools was not inevitable. They materialized out of a system that was relatively resistant to change. New York City schools, and the educational system in which they are embedded, have functioned as bureaucracies for more than a century and often seem to become trapped in the "iron cage of rationalization" (Weber 1958). As Weber reminds us, though the bureaucratic structure developed from the needs of a rapidly growing society and the evolving demands on it, the process has also led to inefficiency as participants become trapped within the tightly regulated and rarely changing bureaucratic structure leading to complacency and the stifling of creativity and innovation. These characteristics have been observed in the New York City school system:

> In many instances, principals, district superintendents and teachers who wanted to make changes and experiment were discouraged from doing so. One headquarters official told of her gloom at coming back to the city after a conference on teaching the disadvantaged. She said that she came back with many new ideas but couldn't talk to Superintendent Donovan about them "because he is so overloaded with emergency matters. And if I went to principals and district superintendents, they wouldn't do anything without Donovan's approval. So that is where we are in New York City (Rogers 1968:279).

Most schools within the American educational system can themselves be considered bureaucracies. In addition to reflecting the Taylorist "quest for efficiency," their structure is intended to ensure fairness within and across schools—by following specific rules and removing favoritism. A consequence of

educational bureaucracy may have been the appearance of meritocracy, which is so prized in American schools (Ballantine 2001).

New York City public schools have retained other remnants of Taylorism as well. The 45-minute classes and the bells that signal the beginning and end of those classes certainly reflect the factory model. The hierarchical structure that places the teacher in the position of power and the student as subservient—the "banking system of education", as labeled by Paulo Freire (1970)—is also widespread in the schools. In New York City, there is a racial element. Black and Latino students, who in 2004-2005 were 71.4 percent of the school population, are trained by predominantly white teachers. Those students most in need—the low-income and minority students in the New York City system—usually also have the youngest and most inexperienced teachers whose teaching strategies tend to focus on either classroom management or rote memorization of facts to pass the Regents exam(s) (Rimer 2003; Holloway 2000).

Public high schools in New York, frequently located in older, deteriorating school buildings and in dangerous neighborhoods, have often been sites of violence and conflict. Julia Richman High School—one of New York City's most infamous comprehensive high schools—became a troubled school after its prestigious origins:

> Buffeted by a changing student population, sharp staffing cuts, and other forces, the enormous and by then coeducational school had degenerated into a cauldron of violence. Students tore out water fountains, destroyed bathrooms, and smashed windows…graffiti covered the school's hallways. Metal cages were constructed in the vice principal's office to separate belligerent students. Local cops labeled the school Julia Rikers…(Toch 2003:19).

An example which demonstrates both the strengths and weakness of a strictly bureaucratic model is the New York City Board of Education. The six elements of Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy—intended to maximize efficiency—can each be found in the New York City Board of Education.

Specialization and a hierarchy of offices are reflected in the distinct departments, boards and divisions within the New York City Board of Education. In the 1960s, Rogers (1968) described the variety of boards including the Board of Regents and the Board of Superintendents as well as the lay board. Forty years later, the offices, organizations, projects, committees and programs had multiplied significantly:

Control	External Relations	Funded and Community Resources	Instruction	Program Development	Operations
Auditor General	Office of Zoning	Parent Advocacy and Engagement	Student Support Services and District 75	Instructional Support	Board of Review
Labor Relations	Special Project Monitoring	Office for Development	Community School District Superintendents	Senior Assistant for the Arts	Chief Financial Officer
Special Investigations	Junior Achievement	Business and Community Relations	High School Superintendents	Executive and New School Development	Food Services and Pupil Transportation
Ethics Officer	Community School District Affairs	**Chief of Staff Special Projects**		Superintendent of Operations	Office of Equal Opportunity
Counsel to the Board	School to Career Program	**Intergovernmental Affairs**		Bilingual Education	Human Resources
NYPD School Safety Division	Monitoring and School Improvement	**Public Affairs**		Multicultural Education	Instructional and Informational Technology
Secretary to the Board	Student Safety and Prevention Services	**Assistants to the Chancellor**		SURR schools	Chief Executive School Facilities
Special Commissioner of Investigations	Non-Public Schools			Chancellor's District	School Construction Authority
	Borough Deputies			Assessment and Accountability	
	Occupational Education Advisory Council				

Figure 1
New York City Board of Education Departments
(Ballantine 2001)

Each of these offices has its own *rules and regulations*, and, given the specialty of the offices, one would expect some display of *technical competence.* It appears that the system struggles with the overemphasis on the *formality of written communication* as "both the president and the entire board often spend days, weeks and even months working on the precise language of new policy proposals" (Rogers 1965: 223). The presence of teaching exams does seem to

indicate an impartial system of hiring; however, “the examination system contribute[d] to the recruitment almost exclusively of local New Yorkers for teaching posts and New York City teachers for supervisory positions,” and therefore “a pattern of inbreeding [during the 1960s] developed that limit[ed] the capacity of the system for innovation” (Rogers 1965: 213).

The New York City Board of Education was described as a “sick” bureaucracy (Rogers 1965; Ballantine 2001; Ravich 1974), in which each department or office was so detached from others that the system often failed to achieve its goals. Furthermore, the Board “supervised” both the micro and macro details of the New York City educational system but often left many aspects of the school system unsupervised. The distance from The Board of Education headquarters in downtown Brooklyn to many low-income and minority neighborhoods was also metaphorical, far enough that students often did not feel the benefits of the system, although they were often affected by its failings.[15]

Both the centralization (and the attendant inability to supervise all parts of the system) and decentralization, (creating spaces that allowed new ideas to develop) of the New York City Board of Education laid the groundwork for the creation of Central Park East One (CPE1) elementary school, which paved the way for Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS) twelve years later (Fliegel 1993). Basic to this endeavor was the view that schools could make changes in the lives of children, despite external social forces.

[15] The Board of Education was once again centralized in 2003 and renamed the Department of Education. The local districts were disbanded.

In addition, this type of school had the potential to promote larger changes—to build the foundation for what would become a social movement to spread small alternative schools. A discussion on the ability of this social movement to succeed will be included in Chapter 7. The emergence of this school was possible, nonetheless, due to a variety of factors which social movement theorists have identified as facilitating movements: recruitment through social networking, a precipitating event, a shared grievance, and hope for success (Aguirre, Wenger and Vigo 1998; Davies 1962; Fine 1997; Oliver 1989; Smelser 1963).

East Harlem's District Four was the site of this new experiment and potential social movement. In 1968, six years before CPE was established, Rogers described the neighborhood:

> One of the areas where the most rapid demographic changes have taken place is East Harlem, which runs north from 96th Street to 132nd Street and east from Fifth Avenue to the East and Harlem Rivers. In 1950, the area was still 45-50% white. Now it is closer to 20% white, 50% Puerto Rican, and 30% Negro. The die may actually have been cast for East Harlem in 1940 when financial institutions, such as the Bowery Bank, decided that it was no longer a profitable place in which to carry on their activities. It soon became a community without a source of financing, even for the most basic needs. Deterioration, especially in housing, proceeded quickly. The area is now extremely poor, with predictable political consequences (Rogers 1968:58).

When Anthony Alvarado, a relatively young Puerto Rican administrator, became superintendent of the district in the mid-seventies, he hired Seymour Fligel to help develop new schools. Together, the two prepared the stage for the emergence of the CPESS experiment. Because they were committed to reviving this failing district and they were willing to accept new approaches and new

leaders, this school district emerged and flourished from roots as bureaucratic and unwieldy as the New York City Board of Education (Fliegel 1993). While the *recruitment* of administrators, teachers, parents, students and supporters to begin these schools and their resulting educational movement continued over the twelve years between CPE1 and CPESS, it began with Alvarado and Fliegel and their recruitment of Deborah Meier to start the CPE-family of schools.

When Central Park East was established in the 1970s little had changed from Rogers's description except for a continuing decline in the percentage of whites who resided in the neighborhood. As with school reforms in other cities, New York City's "educational reform followed from educational disaster" (Wrigley 1997: 158). District Four was one of the worst districts in the city—populated by low-income and mostly minority students:

> Only 16 percent of the children enrolled [in the elementary schools in the district] were reading at grade level. Dropout rates were high, and many of those who did graduate could barely read or do simple arithmetic. Truancy rates were astronomical. Absenteeism was rampant among teachers, many of whom were deeply demoralized. Indiscipline, violence, deteriorating physical plants, and monstrous bureaucratic indifference had all combined to create a failing school system (Fliegel 1993:3).

The opportunity for administrators to create new schools to address these issues was the result of at least three *precipitating events.* The decline in the quality of the New York City schools and District 4 led to an increase in openness to innovation, and the decentralization of the system returned some power over the schools to their respective neighborhoods. The presence of Anthony Alvarado and his interest in making changes in the district also offered support for new types of schools in the present and future educational system.

CPE1 was created as part of the school choice movement popular in the 1970s (Sullivan 2003; Fligel 1993). One of CPE1's goals was to give the mostly low income and minority students in the poorly achieving Spanish Harlem area the opportunity to have the choices that those in wealthier neighborhoods enjoyed (Fliegel 1993). School policy no longer required students to attend the usually large, mostly minority, and often dangerous comprehensive high schools with which most parents and students were familiar (Tyack 1974; Ravich 2000; Fliegel 1993). With school choice, various educational alternatives were to be presented to parents. If parents were allowed to choose their children's schools, the schools would be compelled to perform better in order to attract students. Parents could now send their children out of their neighborhoods rather than to the same school that they had attended as children, and with the founding in 1985 of Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS), parents had the option of alternative schooling through high school.

Families in higher income neighborhoods had been able to send their children to private schools. Others could access the resources necessary to prepare their students for the entrance exams of the specialized[16] high schools in the city.

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[16] At the time, there were four specialized high schools in New York City (there are currently eight). These schools were Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, Bronx High School of Science, Brooklyn Technical High School, and Stuyvesant High School. According to the Department of Education website "These schools were established under New York State Law 2590–Section g…Each school provides students with a unique opportunity to pursue special interests and to develop their talents. Entrance into these schools is by competitive examination except for Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts which is by audition and review of academic records (www.nycenet.edu 2005)."

Low income students had fewer options. Those who could afford it sent their children to Catholic schools which, like other private schools, were smaller than public schools but less expensive (Lee, Bryk, and Holland 1993). The large comprehensive[17] high schools in low-income neighborhoods generally housed thousands of students. Classes were taught in 45-minute blocks with bells signaling the end of class. In these schools, graduation rates and test scores tended to be low, and overworked teachers interacted with hundreds of students every day (Legters, Balfanz, Jordan and McPartland 2002). These schools resembled the "shopping-mall high schools" found around the country. One former CPESS teacher described a first teaching experience in such a school:

> Every day I saw thousands of students moving between four separate buildings, several floors, and various wings. I saw division and compartmentalization by department, by race, by grade, by ability—and student learning fragmented the same way. Six times a day I saw students shuttling from one 45-minute class to the next (Clinchy 2000).

For low-income and middle class students in the city, this was not unusual. This *shared grievance* was the New York City educational system. Deborah Meier, the founder and long-time principal of CPESS and CPE1, together with her faculty and staff, created these schools as an alternative to this system. CPE and CPESS incorporated new educational models that emphasized the ideas of progressive theorists such as John Dewey (1916; 1938) and Paulo Freire (1970).

According to interview respondents and written accounts, the faculty and staff strove to create an educational experience distinct from that found in the

[17] Currently most comprehensive high schools contain thousands of students and are usually low achieving and report many violent incidents (Clinchy 2000, Toch 2003).

public schools. The teachers, faculty, parents and students who chose to be a part of CPESS did not have any evidence that their work would be successful. The successes of the elementary school, however, provided them with the *hope* that their students would achieve similar levels of success. In New York City, these alternative schools within the public sphere were specifically created for the benefit of the low-income and minority students who made up the majority of the public school system in the city, providing these students with an educational option previously unavailable to them.

ENTER THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Alternate schools in cities emerged as a solution to some of the problems facing urban students. Mary Anne Raywid sorts alternative schools into three categories: those that change the student, those that change the school experience, and those that change the school system (1999). When asked how she would describe her school with respect to these options, Meier explained:

> Well, I've always had the same position. I mostly want it to be good for kids who are there. Those kids. That's its first obligation. Do no harm and if possible, do some good. And then keep your fingers crossed that it might change the world, also. And you should probably do a little more than keep your fingers crossed. But it is not fair to the kids in your school to do it mostly for the purpose of changing the world. It has to start off with it, that it's going to serve the kids you have well. And I think it did [Interview].

Research on alternative schools is often suspect because of the ways in which researchers define and classify the schools. For example, some of the research on alternative schools groups compares them with other small schools—yet size is not the only alternative attribute of these schools (Howley 2004). Research on small schools often does not take into account differences in types of small

schools. Rural small schools are often small because of the lower density of students in a given area. In this research, however, alternative schools are defined by other reforms in addition to size, such as educational philosophy, non-traditional curricula, and distinct graduation requirements to create a particular type of institution. As Michelle Fine explains, “Small…will produce a sense of belonging almost immediately, but hugging is not the same as algebra. Rigor and care must be braided together, or we run the risk of creating small, nurturing environments that aren’t schools” (cited in Toch 2003:121).

Alternative schools have existed for many years throughout the country. On the national level, the term “alternative school” also refers to schools for students who are not allowed to attend or are unable to function in traditional high schools—Raywid’s “change the student” schools. These schools include General Equivalency Diploma (GED) programs, night school or “seat time” (where students receive credit for attendance) schools. The alternative high school district in New York City includes more of these types of alternative schools than those based on the CPESS model.

This research is concerned with alternative schools that use an alternative approach to assessment, curriculum, pedagogy, and/or school structure—“change the school experience” schools. In New York City, a particular model of alternative schools, emerged in the 1970s and 80s with the creation of Central Park East and its secondary school to give parents and students a choice in their public educational institutions. These types of alternative schools are not merely small schools; nor are they necessarily schools for individuals who cannot

function in traditional school environments. Rather, they are small schools established with a specific mission: to create a particular educational environment. Progress toward this goal is often assisted by using assessments distinct from the tests and report cards of mainstream schools. It is this unique quality which not only makes the schools an interesting site for research, but also explains why research has not been adequately carried out in these institutions.

When CPESS was launched in 1985, it occupied a building in East Harlem. At the time, the Junior High School 13 building housed CPE1 and JHS13, which led to some concern from the teachers and administrators of the more traditional JHS13 about its longevity. Fears were initially allayed but within a few years, JHS13 was transformed into Music 13, and then phased out. The five-story brick building served the different schools well, keeping them primarily separate while they shared some common areas such as the gym, lunchroom, auditorium and the outdoor cement yard (Fliegel 1993).

Unlike the specialized high schools, CPESS did not require an exam for consideration or entry into the school. Like those schools, however, students interested in CPESS had to select it. In other words, CPESS was not part of the process of assigning students to their neighborhood schools that was in place in New York City at the time. This does raise questions of whether a selection effect must be considered. When asked if there was a particular type of student for which CPESS was best suited, Meier explained:

> I don't know that anything works for everybody…you know, in the lower grades, we used to say the school's designed to be right for everybody who wants to be here. But if there's a family that doesn't, then we're putting the kid in between. If the family thinks this is a stupid way to

> educate kids, then a kid feels torn. So there's always that dilemma about what do we mean by it's right for everybody? I think there's nothing in the model itself that I can say, "Well, this is the kind of kid it doesn't work with." I once had a theory that it didn't work for con artists. Because we were so dependent on interpersonal relationships that a kid that was very clever at conning himself, we wouldn't know how to handle. Because we were always accustomed to trusting…and it doesn't matter if the teacher has to look him straight in the eye and say, "Well, I don't care how charming and wonderful and sweet you are, this is the rule and I can't change it." So it is possible there are kids who need some rigidity. But I wouldn't know how to recognize that kid. But I can see a parent saying this school has too much room for flexibility, and my kid is always figuring out how to use that as an excuse.

To a certain extent, CPESS students were specifically selected. Either the student or the parents had to be aware of the school and understand that once a student chose the school, the family was required to visit and spend time observing the classrooms. This required the previous knowledge or the motivation to find out about educational options and to follow up on the requirements. In contrast, the elementary schools did not require specific selection, and students who lived in the neighborhoods of the three schools would not have had to be unusually motivated to enter the school. As described in the previous chapter, approximately 50 percent of students who responded to the survey enrolled in CPESS after graduation from a CPE elementary school. While fully exploring this question would require additional research, the students at CPESS represented a mix of those who specifically selected the school as well as those for whom it was convenient.

CPESS' connection to the elementary schools was also reflected in its structure—the school built on the legacy of CPE1. In fact, when Ted Sizer—the founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools—approached Deborah Meier to

begin the school, he asked her if she could expand CPE1 further, using the principles he laid out in *Horace's Compromise* (1984). The school was created by committee. Meier, along with others (Herb Rosenfeld, Ceclia Trout, Pat Walter, Ester Rosenfeld and Pat Prince were a few that she named in her interview) designed the school in a year from 1983 to 1984 (Meier Interview 2007).

Similar to the elementary school, CPESS was based on what Lee, Bryk and Holland (1993) term voluntary communities—school situations where students and teachers work together to create a community in which both groups are willing participants. According to Meier, she used open classrooms and a flattened hierarchy to allow students to "come out feeling very intellectually and personally powerful, both to shape their own lives and to influence the world around them [Interview]." At the high school level, small size was critical to implementing the voluntary community. As such, it contrasted with the comprehensive high schools attended by most public high school students and the specialized high schools (attended by a minority of students). CPESS included grades seven through twelve and enrollment was between 500 and 600 students. This in itself made it one of the smallest public high schools in the city, but there were a variety of other ways that CPESS' faculty and staff endeavored to make their small school even smaller.

SMALLER PEICES

In contrast to the model, which, according to teachers and students is traditionally found in most public schools, the CPESS model emphasized a more organic organization with non-hierarchical units supporting each other. Individual

teachers were responsible for much smaller numbers of students then they would have been in other schools. There was a more egalitarian and less hierarchical structure among the staff than in traditional schools. As a grade was added every year between 1984 and 1991, CPESS slowly grew beyond what Meier considered to be the ideal size. According to respondents, however, the subdivisions continued to give the school a sense of smallness. Administrators officially divided CPESS into three divisions: Division 1 (D1) was the junior high (intermediate or middle) school, containing seventh and eighth grade students; Division 2 (D2) included ninth and tenth grade; and finally, the Senior Institute (SI) housed eleventh and twelfth grade students (Raywid and Henderson 1994).

Within the first two divisions, students occupied smaller units—houses. In the East and West Houses in D1, classes took place on opposite sides of double doors. In D2, the North and South houses were separated by a flight of stairs (see Figure 2). One graduate remembers:

> [I was] totally fascinated by what they did in Division 1 of the houses…It was one of those totally obvious but really effective ways that they made community. Where it was this totally arbitrary thing… breaking us up into those small groups, it was like you did feel some sense of connection, I guess" (Kenneth Edward[18] Interview 2006).

[18] Not his real name. All respondent names are pseudonyms with the exception of the interviews with the founder, for whom there was no way to conceal her identity.

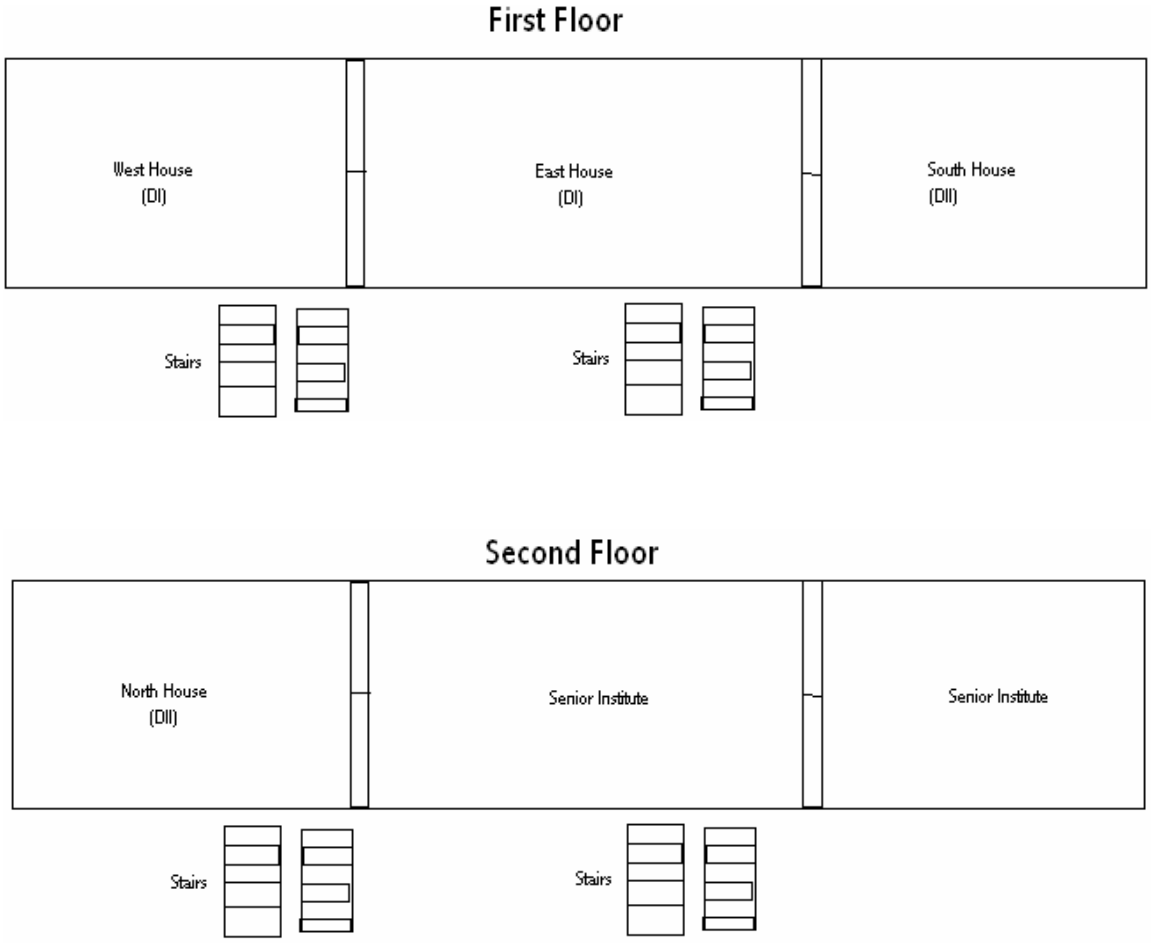

Figure 2
CPESS Floor Plan

The students spent most of their time in these "houses" and met students from other houses only during lunch, recess,[19] and in the hours before and after school. The houses limited the number of classrooms through which students maneuvered and the teachers also only had a limited number of students

[19] Technically, recess was gym class. There was no formal gym class, however, and students were allowed to participate in several different activities, including sitting in the bleachers and talking. CPESS gym class/recess was included with lunch on students' schedules.

(approximately 75) whom they got to know well over a two year period. One Humanities teacher commented "That's what Central Park East taught me…that you break it down into class sizes of 20, advisories of 15, and you could get at working with kids in a more comprehensive kind of way." She added a comment about Meier:

> She was able to keep the class sizes 20 or less. And that's huge. You can't go over 25, no matter what. But as soon as you get to 25, it's that much more complicated. Say you have two humanities classes. That's ten more papers to grade, so that's another 30 minutes of marking on top of an hour and a half. So it just adds that much more. It's that many more kids to follow up on. It's that many more advisees in your advisory. I think the fact that she was able to keep it at 20 or under was a huge easing of the teachers' loads, and it's much harder to duplicate the model as soon as you go over 20. At a middle school, if you go over 25, there's no way you could do it. In high school–I mean you could go up to 25. But there's going to be kids lost in the cracks, no matter what. (Ellen Donald)

Classes were grouped heterogeneously with both grades in a division participating in the same classes (Cushman 1992). The limited size of these house groups also proved to be useful to the teachers who would meet once a week (during students' community service block) to discuss the school and its function.

The most intimate group was the advisory. Similar to homeroom in traditional schools, advisory was a place where students met every day, where attendance could be taken and where students, in their own words, could "debrief" and "decompress." In addition, students reported forming bonds with each other during the structured and non-structured activities[20] in advisory. Likewise, the proximity of being in advisory with the same fifteen students for a

[20] Activities include journal writing, papers and discussions on relevant social issues and reading. Later advisories included preparations for graduation.

year (half of the students would remain in the advisory for a second year while the older students moved on to the next division or to graduation) aided in forming close bonds. One advisor explained: “There are so many kids who I meet later on who I would be like ‘you’ve been friends with such and such for years, why?’ ‘Oh, I was in Nancy’s advisory so…’” Students spoke fondly of their advisories, using such words as *love, family, home* and *stability* to describe the group of students and their teacher in their different advisories.[21]

CPESS attempted to reinforce the values of community through advisory trips in D1 and D2 which also acquainted students with colleges. In D1 and D2, two advisories joined together to visit a college for three days and two nights. Students would stay at the college either with current students or at a nearby motel, visit the local sites, and take a tour of the campus. For students, these trips also fostered responsibility and “put a ridiculous amount of trust into a group of teenagers (Kenneth Edward).”

Student bonding in advisory was only half of the system’s goal, according to teachers and students, the other part was the closeness of interaction between the student and advisor. Each advisor had fifteen to twenty students, and that teacher became the teacher with whom they were most familiar. Advisors read all the faculty reports on their students, spoke to their teachers, if necessary, and interacted with the student at a social level that most other classroom teachers could not attain. Advisors could discover specific problem areas or strengths in students that emerged across courses. “Cecilia’s reports have a common thread

[21] While most students had only three advisors (one every two years), other students could have had as many as six due to teacher turn-over.

running though them," wrote a D1 advisor in a student evaluation. "They describe a student who is capable of exceeding grade expectations yet allows herself to be easily distracted in class…Cecilia completes assignments in the allotted time but makes careless spelling and punctuation errors. Let's work on improving these points this trimester" (Evaluation D1 120188).

Another advisor explained:

> The advisor was the "expert" on each of his advisees. So, if you're doing well in humanities, your humanities teacher will tell me about it and I'll say "hey, [your teacher] told me that you're doing great. Keep it up" and if you're messing up somewhere, then I'll find out about it and if I need to, of course, I'll call home. Also, at some point, the advisor was responsible for getting together and distributing all of your reports so everyone would submit your reports to me, I would collate them get them all together. I would write a cover letter because I read all of them. I'd write a letter to you and to your parents and send you home with it or mail it. (Jim Geneva)

At the D1 and D2 levels, the advisor played the role of a guidance counselor as well as assisting in the navigation of the student's education. In this context, the advisor might facilitate advisory activities such as planning a trip, journal writing, or reading (Cushman 1990). In the Senior Institute, the advisor sometimes adopted the additional role of college counselor—assisting in a student's college decisions, application process, and the completion of the necessary requirements to graduate.

PEDAGOGY

According to students, the way the school was structured contributed to a feeling of closeness in an already small school, but the pedagogy inside the classroom also fostered community. Administrators and colleagues encouraged teachers to adopt a supportive teaching style using a student-centered approach

that emphasized student presentations and group work “to help one another understand and work though assignments (Evaluation D1 Y2 T1).” Though teachers might have desks at what could be called the front of the classroom, students’ desks were usually unassigned, or they were positioned either in small groups of four or five or in larger circles or squares, facing each other,

> That way the kids could interact with each other, versus having rows where the teacher just teaches at the students. When the class has the students facing each other in a circle, it allows us an opportunity to interact with each other and hear each other’s ideas and really immerse ourselves in learning environments and that was definitely a good thing (Vicente Ortega, student).

The school philosophy encouraged students to participate actively in their education. If, according to Ted Sizer (1984), “the student’s learning is the product [of education and] everything else is the means,” then one of the ideas behind CPESS was to give students ownership over the means of their educational production. Teachers spoke of this as being in sharp contrast to the more traditional schools characterized by an authoritarian structure and student workers who were distant from both the means and the product of their education. Kimberly, who eventually obtained a degree from a prestigious liberal arts college, explains:

> The teachers listened to you as long as you listened to them. It’s more like a conversation than “this is what you’re learning and memorize this and tell it to me tomorrow.” It was more like “this is what we’re going to discuss today.” I think that really helps…Like me, I remember a lot of things that I learned more from CPESS than I learned from college. Because in college, I just got information. I memorized it and then I spit it back and then it disappeared but in CPESS it was really like we discussed things and we had roles. (Kimberly Hawthorne)

HABITS OF MIND

The *Habits of Mind* –five guidelines that the school strongly encouraged students of to use in all classes—also structured CPESS' model of urban schooling. These Habits of Mind emphasized the significance of using evidence and making connections between assignments, across disciplines and throughout the entire course. According to Meier, the Habits were developed in an early meeting during the formation of CPESS. Rather than asking what students in each field should know at the end of their time at CPESS, the group modified their question to "If you ran into someone at a party, what would tell you that they could use their mind well?" They came up with the five Habits of Mind—1) the students' ability to make connections across distinct areas, 2) to see varying perspectives, 3) to collect evidence, 4) to discover significance, 5) and to speculate on other options (see Appendix J for more detail). It was through these practices that the faculty and staff at CPESS intended to instill critical thinking and civic attitudes in their students to create graduates who participated broadly and constructively in their communities and their nation.

Students' evaluations also assessed their ability to use the Habits of Mind. Statements such as "generally knowledgeable, can make connections between the material we study and her knowledge of the world in general," and "she was able, through questions in her oral presentation, to make a number of sophisticated arguments, and make connections between situations of black Americans in revolutionary times and now" were scattered throughout the reports

evaluating students' ability to apply the Habits of Mind—in this case to make connections across distinct lines—in their work.

The Habits of Mind were also embodied in the school's pedagogical practices which emphasized "depth over breadth"[22] rather than focusing narrowly on testable academic skills. Distinct from most New York City public schools, CPESS students were not required to take Regents examinations to graduate from high school. Instead, the school utilized performance-based assessment, portfolios, to demonstrate students' readiness to move on to the next stage of education. These portfolios included academic work as well as less traditional products such as performance and art work.

Parents experienced the school's emphasis on depth through the narrative reports that went to the family every term. Grades included ((U)nstatisfactory, (S)atisfactory and (D)istinguished), but teachers also took the time to write out details of the student's relationships and work in the classroom as well as her improvement over time. "[The story] 'Omar and Me' shows the development of a sophisticated narrative technique," a Humanities evaluation read. "The scene in the diner successfully incorporates two flashbacks which develop the characters without stopping the flow of the plot. This year, Cecilia made much progress toward employing the conventions of written English, especially in regard to issues of capitalization and sentence punctuation. Spelling and dialogue punctuation remain areas which need work (Evaluation D2 Final 60090)." The narrative evaluation allowed a level of personalization that report cards did not.

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[22] As stated in the Coalition of Essential Schools Ten Common Principles (see Appendix A).

The school often required students to include a self evaluation to explain their views of their school progress. Some evaluations examined their entire trimester, others included self-evaluations for individual classes. For example, in the Senior Insitutue class, *The War in Vietnam,* a student wrote about herself "I think the debate also went well. I spoke out, which is a new thing for me, and I felt comfortable expressing my viewpoint" (Evaluation 0493). In addition to paper reports, family conferences, in which students and parents met with the advisor and discussed the students' progress, occurred two to three times a year. Teachers reported that the evaluations were time-consuming, sometimes taking an entire 40-hour work week to complete; but that it forced them to get to know their students' work in depth and to reflect on their own learning and teaching about the Habits of Mind.

INSIDE THE DIVISIONS

Division 1 and 2 (D1 & 2)

At the classroom level, the depth versus breadth philosophy was manifested in block, or long-block, scheduling. While the school administrators made adjustments in the types of scheduling over the years, courses in D1 and D2 were usually structured by trimester, each day framed by three to five long blocks including math and science,[23] humanities (social studies, art, English and other subjects which were not considered hard science) and advisory. Each of

[23] CPESS has both separated math and science into two classes and combined them as one team taught math/science unit. When math/science was combined, each teacher saw fewer students. There was some disagreement, however, about whether this formation meant that the school deemphasized either math or science (see Chapter 7 for further discussion)

these blocks (except for advisory, which usually met for 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the day) met for two or three hours each day (Cushman 1989). The use of these blocks allowed time for larger projects and for teachers to get to know their students (Cushman 1995). Take home and in-class projects called exhibitions utilized students' ability to work in both groups and on their own. Students worked throughout the trimester building on the various concepts learned. These projects also provided an opportunity for students to incorporate their own interests into their school projects. One student remembers a physics project in math/science class where she had to design various amusement park rides. "All of my rides were Disney rides and so I had A Little Mermaid water ride and a Peter Pan free fall… (Joy Vernon 2006)." Teachers encouraged students to find their voice even in subjects that traditionally did not include much writing.

> *The Matrices and Point Value* (D) and *Matrices and Life* (D) were both excellent pieces of work. In particular the situation she created for *Matrices and Life* was interesting, off beat and funny. I enjoyed reading this at the same time it was clear in the explanations that Cecilia was also doing mathematics—analyzing coming to results based on conclusions. Cecilia has a good sense of audience and a well developed 'voice' in her work" (Evaluation D2 0391).

Furthermore, all humanities classrooms across Division 1 (and, separately, those across D2) were connected through the use of Essential Questions. Questions such as "What is an American?" were the unifying focus of a year of study that ranged from the Harlem renaissance to the European settlement of the New World and Jewish immigration to the U.S. In all of these classes, as in the math and science classes, the school expected students to use the Habits of Mind which were a major part of the rubric used in grading all important assignments.

The curriculum was structured as a cycle, ensuring that students in each grade received the same curriculum. For example, if student A is in the tenth grade and student B is in the ninth, they would both learn about the Harlem Renaissance at the same time, but when student A moved to the Senior Institute, student B would learn what A had learned the year before.

The school required all students to participate in community service, which was scheduled once a week during a morning block for the entire four years of Division 1 and 2. “Community/school service is part of every student’s program at Central Park East Secondary School,” coordinators explained in students’ evaluations; “Each student can make an effective contribution to our school and neighboring community and benefit from their experience. Every attempt is made to place students in settings which are appropriate to their age, skills and attitude. We try to find challenging placements where students can make a difference.” Based on their interests, students volunteered for jobs both in the school and in the community that were listed in a pre-screened booklet. One student, who is currently a part of an organization that works with students, remarked:

> It was a tutoring center in Harlem for adult tutoring. I wasn’t a tutor. You know what I liked about that so much? There were very frank conversations about, you know, the fact that these are adults coming in, trying to learn to read. So one of the things is that they didn’t want to create the scenario where you have this kid in there. So they were very sensitive about, you know, what my role was there. I think those are great kind of placements, where you're put to work with these kinds of challenging areas. (Ramon Quesada)

Students had community service assignments in locations such as the classrooms of CPE1 (as well as CPE2 and River East), in administrative offices

in the school, off-campus educational programs, and at Mt. Sinai Hospital, two blocks away.

Senior Institute (SI)

A student entered the Senior Institute after finishing course requirements for D1 and 2. The structure of senior institute courses resembled college, rather than high school courses. In contrast to the large blocks of Division 1 and 2, the Senior Institute was composed of shorter blocks, usually four per day, with each block about an hour long. Students chose from specifically focused science, math, literature, and history courses rather than the survey-type courses they took in D1 and 2. Students selected from courses such as *Geometry, Science and Technology, Genetics, Good and Evil* (literature) and *Rethinking Columbus* (history) in accordance with their priorities, interests and open scheduling blocks. In addition, the school expected students to take at least one college level course[24] during their two years at the Senior Institute.

At the Senior Institute level, students continued to focus on large projects, but, as the classes were shorter, the projects were more compact. In addition, students were presented with a new "exhibition-like" process—the graduation requirement of completing fourteen portfolios[25] and a senior project. Each

[24] College level courses included professor-taught courses on a college campus with a full enrollment of high school students and courses that were official college courses with spaces for one or two CPESS students.

[25] As explained in the students' official transcript as a note to college admissions "Graduation from CPESS requires completion of the 14 portfolios and Senior Project listed below, as well as the [Regents Competency Test (RCT)]. "Courses, seminars and independent study are the means by which students develop the skills and knowledge to complete these. Seven of the Portfolios – the "majors" – are defended before the full Graduation Committee. These are graded based on all the material included as well as the

portfolio, re-graded as a complete package including a cover page and a table of contents, contained a collection of items from the student's tenure at CPESS. In a fashion unknown to most secondary education, the school expected students to present seven of their portfolios and the senior project to a committee of teachers, students and outside observers, which included parents, professors and other professionals. In this way, students demonstrated and defended their knowledge of a range of topics. They prepared themselves to be critical of their own work and address the critiques of others. Portfolio subjects ranged from fine arts, to history, to practical skills and knowledge. Those topics that fell outside of traditional academic requirements created opportunities for students to use their education in unique ways that emphasized their strengths. Through constructing autobiographical and post-graduation plan portfolios, students developed the ability to look both forward and backward in their educational and life experiences and through this gain a distinctive perspective on their lives and future paths.

ORGANIZING THE ORGANIZATION

As an organization, the division of labor in a traditional school is fairly simple. At the top are various administrators—principals, and above them, superintendents and commissioners—each with different levels of power,

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knowledge and skill demonstrated before the Committee. The minors are completed through examination, attestation or less extended projects under the supervision of relevant experts and approved by the Graduation Committee. Portfolios are available upon request. Please refer to the Curriculum Bulletin for further details." The seven major portfolio areas were Post-Graduation Plan, Mathematics, Science and Technology, History, Literature, Autobiography, and Fine Arts/ Aesthetics. The minors were Geography, Physical Challenge, Practical Skills and Knowledge, Internship, Dual Language, Mass Media and Social Issues.

depending on both the system and the individuals involved. At the level below the administrators are the teachers who have control over their classrooms.[26]

One approach to examining the structure of educational institutions is to determine who the clients are and where they are located in the school's hierarchy. In many expensive private schools, the parents are the clients and through them, the students are as well (Chubb and Moe 1988; Goldring and Shapira 1993). In the larger, urban public schools that serve low-income and minority students, it often appears that the clients are anyone but the parents and students who are often considered to be at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Teachers at CPESS, like their private school counterparts, reported that the clients were the students. According to one teacher, CPESS "focused on the clients—as long as that was possible. Students were the forefront of everything. The education catered to the students" (Clarissa Edison). This was partially manifested in the flattening of the student-teacher-administrator hierarchy. The vertical differentiation at CPESS was considered to be very low as "CPESS treated the students as equals (Clarissa Edison)." This hierarchy—or lack thereof—will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Horizontal differentiation was also low—the number of levels in the hierarchy was limited. The main divisions, according to interviews with teachers, were reflected in whether one was a teacher in D1 or D2 (the first two divisions) or the Senior Institute. Several teachers commented on the disconnect between

[26] There is another level in this hierarchy which includes the support staff that keeps the school running. While they are an important aspect of the functioning of the school, they are outside the scope of this particular analysis.

the Senior Institute and the rest of the school. They referred to it as “its own separate entity” and Division 1 and 2 as “the minor leagues”.

In all divisions (as well as other small schools), teachers’ job responsibilities extended beyond the classroom. Much of their time outside the classrooms was spent in meetings. During D1 and D2, teachers met every Monday during the students’ community service block. A “team” of three or four teachers in each subject area met together to discuss their course curricula and/or present practice class activities.

> Say you’re the humanities team, it might be three or four teachers and hopefully, in terms of the design of how teachers are chosen, the ideal would be there’s a history person—at least somewhere in their background—a psychology, an art, an anthropology, a literature person, so [together] they’re gonna develop their curriculum around justice which is the whole year. (Isaac Richard)

> We’d have these vertical meetings where all of humanities would meet together, and all of math/science would meet together. And it would just suddenly, like at a certain point of time, it was like, “Oh, so literature’s broken down like that with this kind of vision.” And I would present how social studies was broken down…So there was this action research atmosphere all the time. And what Central Park East did do was to give you enough open space to do that kind of action research and not limit you by prescribed, pre-determined curriculum. I mean, there were a lot of great, interesting teachers there. (Ellen Donald)

Vertical meetings occurred less often and included all teachers involved in humanities, for example, across all three divisions.

> Some years, it would be once every two months. Some years, it would be once a month. Some years, we’d have it twice a month. It depended on what the professional development focus was. Like at one point in time, there was one particular year where we really wanted to align the curriculums from 7th through 12th. And so we were doing it twice a month. There were some years where we wanted to hash out what the graduation portfolio was going to be. So you wouldn’t be doing – like you’d be meeting as a full group. Or you’d have certain smaller groups

> meeting together. There was a lot of collaborative work, intellectually, about the goals of the school, constantly. (Ellen Donald)

Early in its evolution, the school had regularly scheduled faculty meetings, where all teachers met to examine, debate, and decide on a variety of school-wide topics. As the school grew, an all-faculty meeting was deemed no longer feasible. Instead, the school developed an executive committee or a cabinet. Teachers were elected to positions on the committee and had the ability to make decisions with their administrators.

> By the time we got at our maximum size, I thought we were too big. And the sign to me that we were too big was that I felt we needed an executive committee. That when we all gathered together, there was too many of us for everybody to be heard. And it was too easy for some people to sit in the back of the room. So we developed this executive committee, and everybody was reluctant about it—the staff—because they could see what would happen if we did that. But I said if we don't do that I'm ending up having my own little executive committee that I select. Because, you know, an idea comes to me, and I can't bring all my ideas to everybody, so I need to bounce it off, so there are two or three people I start bouncing it off of, and then they informally become the executive committee. So we have a choice of either acknowledging that I'm going to create one informally, or formally doing it. And people felt if we were going to do it, it should be formal. And then when we did that, then the executive committee which was like 13 people out of a staff of 40, would be annoyed when the staff didn't agree with them, and wanted to re-discuss it. Because people felt, "Well we spent all this time, and you don't even trust us." But if on the other hand if the staff did trust them, and didn't spend any time, then people began to think, "You just want us to be a 'yes' body. I mean, why have staff meetings?" … so it became a tension. And the nice thing was that before that it had never been. Everybody knew that if they missed a meeting, they missed a meeting, but decisions are made by the people in that room. So I think there was a loss. And I think it may have had an effect on how relatively easy it was to undermine the school many years later (Deborah Meier).

Meier and others suggest that at the early stages, the teachers felt they had ownership of the school and found the administration to be rather "hands-off" unless there was a serious issue. Members of discipline teams were involved in

hiring and removing teachers, if it was deemed necessary. The school was "democratic" in the sense that teachers voted on important issues and worked collaboratively on lesson planning. Meier continues:

> We felt strongly that democracy rested on the idea of community accountability. That democracy is a word for accountability. And a word for the fact that we're accountable to each other. We have an impact on each other. And so democracy is a way of structuring such accountability, but it rests on that idea that there is a community and that the community – that everybody has a choice – and if they're going to be part of this community, they have to take responsibility for it. So it was the same attitude we had toward the teachers, that they were accountable to each other, not just the principal or the state or something. That the staff interviewed each other, and when people were hired, it was the act of the teachers who were going to have to work with them. And that if we thought someone was not performing well, it was the responsibility of the faculty to figure out what to do about it. And if we thought one of our colleagues was not teaching what we had agreed we would teach, it was the responsibility of the faculty to do something about it. So that, because we thought those were all part of what you're teaching people to carry on the best traditions of a society, and we thought democracy was the better part of our tradition.

Since the teachers' courses were not focused around a particular curriculum in the Senior Institute, some faculty members stated that collaboration was not as prevalent as in the lower divisions. Other faculty members, however, maintain that there was still some level of collaboration. One Senior Institute teacher described his experiences with collaboration in the Senior Institute.

> Senior Institute, as you know, people taught their own classes and so while you might still present [a] class, no one else has [that] background so how are they going to help. So, other people can give you ideas and, certainly, we did a lot of stuff where we would show, internally, work and kind of classes, or people would look at portfolios [of my subject] and say "does this draft have weaknesses?" and not just in terms of the [student] but in terms of…I understood we don't lecture and I was never gonna do that anyway. I had strong views about the world—I would say the pedagogy or mechanics or craft of teaching. I had none of that…"group work, how do you get that to work?" I basically had to reinvent that or make up that but …I would say that that was a weakness in terms of the

> school and supporting me but some of that is specific to the senior institute as well (Isaac Richard).

The United Federation of Teachers, New York's teacher's union generally had a strong voice in the New York school system (cf. Ocean Hill-Brownsville). The union sets standards for hiring, firing and work conditions for the entire city system. Each member of Central Park East Secondary School's faculty, however, waived several of their union rights, based on the view held by teachers, staff and administrators that union involvement could impede the proper functioning of the school.[27]

It was obviously difficult for this flattened hierarchy to extend to relationships in the larger system, but, according to some faculty members, Meier did her best to keep pressures from the external hierarchy from affecting the functioning of the school.

> And that was another thing that Debbie had, was that she had tremendous connections at the alternative high school office. And the original superintendent – I can't remember his name; he was a very cool guy – he protected us. It was the alternative high school superintendent. I'll remember his name after you leave! But he was very – he would look the other way constantly. His whole vision is how do I protect these schools so they can do a good job? How do I keep off their backs? How do I make sure that I'm not dragging the principals out of the building? And essentially, that's the empowerment zone, on a very, very small scale…When they sent her paperwork, she'd throw half of it away. She'd say, "They don't need this. I'm not filling this out. I'm not wasting my time." (Ellen Donald)

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[27] The waiving of union rights included those which governed restrictions on the number of work hours and breaks between classes. It could be argued that this leads to overworked and burnt-out teachers. This hypothesis was not supported by my interviews, however. Teachers did agree that CPESS required a great deal of work, but none of the teachers reported feelings of burn-out or adverse interactions with their life outside of the school. The research did not include younger teachers who were beginning families while working at CPESS. Further research may more fully address this question.

As will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7, this school's organization and structure had profound effects on their students as well as rippling effects throughout the larger school system. The initiatives of Meier and her staff at the high school and the primary school level inspired teachers and administrators around the city and the country to create similar institutions based on the CPESS model of learning. Organizations such as the Coalition of Essential Schools, and its New York affiliate the Center for Collaborative Education, were created in the mid-eighties to organize schools nationally to incorporate methods similar to CPE and CPESS. "New Visions for Public Schools is the largest educational reform organization dedicated to improving the quality of education children receive in New York City's public schools (Melcher 2005)." It is an initiative that was influenced by alternative schools and has now developed into an organization that promotes the expansion of small schools—funding projects from individuals and organizations to create new schools in New York. More recently, the New York Performance Standards Consortium was created as a network of 30 schools which, following CPESS' example, agreed to use at least four performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs)—or portfolios—as graduation requirements. Currently, these alternative schools are struggling to maintain their alternative methods within a system growing increasingly more traditional. Many of these alternative schools have made use of graduation requirements based on projects, interpretation, and critical thinking for more than 10 years. Over this same period of time, the New York State graduation requirements have moved further towards standardized exams and memorization (Banner 1999). The

definitions of success and measures of assessment in these alternative schools had only marginal recognition as legitimate gauges of necessary skills, when, in 1998 and June 2005, the Board/Department of Education issued waivers to these schools that would allow students to opt out of the Regents exams. In 2010, when the latest waiver expires, the schools will be evaluated by the state, and a decision will be made on their direction for the future.

Much of the impetus for this current movement began with CPE and CPESS and the schools often used their popularity to support the creation of other schools. For example, a news conference was held by educators at CPESS in 1993 to “draw attention to efforts to open six small high schools at various locations in Manhattan”. The audience was told by the president of the New York City Board of Education: “They will provide safe and caring environments in which all students can be known well. They set a direction for effective school reform in New York City for years to come” (Dillon 1993).

In the bureaucratic New York City public school system, Central Park East Secondary School developed as a new model. Despite the problems of neighborhood and school segregation, centralization and decentralization, and the iron cage of rationalization, the school attempted to create a space for transformations in the system. The structure of CPESS was designed to facilitate its innovative educational methods. It was as a result of this structure that the school was able to meet some of its goals but may have been less successful in meeting others. The following chapters will discuss some of the latent and

manifest goals of the school and the ways in which the structure intervened in the achievement or failure of meeting these goals.

Chapter 4

Fight the Power!

Educational Resistance in Practice

The faculty and administration of Central Park East Secondary School combined various structural elements with the intention of creating a superior educational experience for under-served, low income, and minority students in the New York City public school system. The previous chapter examined the history, emergence and structure of the school. This chapter builds on that by addressing how that structure was used to create spaces of resistance through non-traditional educational practices. The founders, administrators, and teachers of CPESS intended that these elements would create an environment that not only improved the education of the New York City public school students, but also worked toward changing the educational system in which the school was enmeshed. The CPESS faculty and administration were guided by several theoretical perspectives. These served to help frame their use of alternative structural, pedagogical, and curricular elements in order to support an educational environment that would allow students to resist the pressures to conform to the external social structure.

PHILOSOPHICAL STRUCTURE

When teachers at CPESS were asked what theories, ideas, or motivations structured their approaches to education, John Dewey and Paulo Freire were most frequently mentioned. These theorists, who are at the forefront of

progressive education, represent the theorization of progressive education in two regional arenas—the global north and south.

In the industrialized countries—the "global north" [28]—the best known progressive theories of education are identified with the liberal commitment to creating schools that would support some level of educational opportunities for all students. John Dewey and A. N. Whitehead, writing in response to the Taylorist influences on education, both elaborated new approaches to education. Rather than a one-size-fits-all educational assembly line where students can be compared to cogs in a system, Dewey and Whitehead emphasized the importance of an individualized approach to education, utilizing students' values, beliefs and community to aid their learning experiences (Dewey 1997 [1916], Whitehead 1967).[29]

Less recognized in the global north are the social and ideological interventions of African Americans. For example, while many educators theorized about creating a relevant education system, Septima Clark put the ideas into practice through the creation of citizenship schools. She used items of interest to her students—street signs and the Constitution—as materials to teach students to read (Gyant and Atwater 1996).These schools also functioned to counteract the restrictive practices designed to prevent African Americans from voting. Such

[28]The global north and south, through imprecise categories, are frequently used in the literature to represent industrialized and less industrialized countries rather than the global absolutes of north and south.

[29] Though some interpretations of Dewey depict him as an educator who believed that all citizens should be educated in order to participate in a democracy but not necessarily equally, there is also strong support for a more egalitarian reading of Dewey (Petrovic 1998; Muschinske 1976).

practices would, for example, require African Americans to be able to read and interpret the Constitution before they could exercise their right to vote (Gyant and Atwater 1996). Rosa Parks met Clark at the Highlander School in the 1950s, and after their meeting remarked that Clark and others like her were the inspiration for Parks to fight against Jim Crow and segregation. Septima Clark's work demonstrated how African Americans could use education to empower themselves (Botsch 2000; Anyon 2005).

In the south, Paulo Freire's focus on the strengths of community has been very influential in those educational contexts that seek to empower the oppressed. In Cuba, the government successfully employed his methods in a literacy campaign in which thousands of volunteers raised the literacy level in the country by nearly 90 percent in only one year (Kozol 1980). One of Freire's attractions to the administrators and teachers of alternative schools is that he argues that it is the structure of most schools that fails to empower its students. He defines the educational process as:

> An act of depositing in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store (2003 [1970]:72).

CAPITAL AND HABITUS

Though interview respondents did not cite Pierre Bourdieu, he has identified these "things" as "cultural arbitraries" that those in power require students to learn (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). For Bourdieu, the ability of

students to adapt and assimilate to these arbitraries—those concepts, ideas, etc that the educational system has decided that they must learn—depends on the capital they have available to them. The concept of cultural capital provides an approach to determining a school's hidden structures (Bourdieu 1986).

> Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of a long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee (Bourdieu 2000[1986]).

While all families have a form of cultural capital, the capital controlled by some groups is more privileged in the school and workplace than that of others (Sewell & Shah 1968; Ogbu 1983). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) suggest that the value of a group's cultural capital is measured by the closeness of their capital to that of the dominant group. It is most often capital associated with middle and upper class (and often white) individuals that is valued in American society and education, and, therefore, those who fall outside this category may find that they cannot use their capital to their advantage. Students who are able to work the system can succeed in school and, eventually, work it more easily than those without the appropriate cultural capital (Pope 2001).

Cultural capital has a somewhat conflicted history in American educational research. The concept is frequently used to examine the often insurmountable distance between white and black students upon entrance into the school

system. Cultural capital is the term used to explain what the upper/middle-class white students possess that black students are unable to access (Dumais 2002, Eitle and Eitle 2002, Lareau and Weininger 2003). The dominant form of cultural capital in this context refers to knowledge of the language, mannerisms, dress, and other cultural references of the power-holders—the white, middle and upper class. A smaller set of researchers divide cultural capital into categories such as dominant and non-dominant to account for the type of capital that is valued and that which is dismissed (Young 1999, Carter 2003). The understanding of cultural capital utilized in this research is closer to the latter explanation in that different groups or individuals have capital that is valued in some arenas and not in others.

For Bourdieu, habitus—"a system of durably acquired systems of perception, thought and action, engendered by objective conditions, but tending to persist even after an alteration of those conditions" (cited in Wallace and Wolf 1999:114)—determines the ways in which individuals use their capital. An individual's habitus consists of the habits, attitudes, behaviors and other attributes that make up one's life environment. Habitus can also have occupational consequences. For example, a graduate of a business school, rather than being chosen for a job based on her degrees, may actually be selected based on habitus—the values, norms and ideas that she has adopted because of the business school environments (Collins 1971, Weber 1946).[30]

[30] Neither Max Weber nor Randall Collins made direct reference to habitus, however their description of the selection process used by these institutions brings to mind Bourdieu's formulations.

Together, habitus and capital work on a field to create practice. The capital of an individual is valued differently in different fields; an individual's habitus determines how that capital is applied to different situations (Bourdieu 1979). Individual and group habitus may be oriented in dissimilar ways. A variety of studies have examined the ways in which black[31] and low-income individuals deploy their various types of capital in ways that could be considered more communal than that of other groups. For example, Higginbotham and Weber (1992) demonstrated that while both black and white women took advantage of community support in their home lives (social capital), black women were more likely to feel as though they had obligations to those who had helped them. They were also found to have more mutually supportive relationships with others in their community. Families in low income neighborhoods generally rely strongly on family and community support in order to survive (Stack 1974, Mullings and Wali 2001). This would suggest that a concept such as community might be an important aspect of the habitus of low income and minority students when they enter school.

> I remember [my Bronx neighborhood] being very village oriented. Everyone in my building knew each other. And all the kids hung out with each other and all the parents knew each other. It was one of those things where, if the next door neighbor caught you doing something, then you knew it was gonna get back to your parents, you know…it was everyone else's job to watch each other's kids (Vincente Ortega, student).

[31] Race is an important concept in American sociology as well as American education. While it is not always directly addressed as a specific variable in this dissertation, issues of race are integral to this research. The percentage of white Americans in the New York City public schools is relatively low as compared to blacks and Latinos (16.1, 35.1 34.7, respectively). Therefore, much of the data specifically applies to blacks and Latinos.

In *On Our Own Terms,* Leith Mullings (1996) explains that in addition to the "second-shift" (Hochschild 1989) of most women, women of color also experience a 'triple day' comprising full- or part-time work outside of the home, a household full of the work of tasks and chores, and the work of holding the family and community together. Researchers have found that among women of color maintaining networks is a very important strategy that facilitates family and community survival.

Research has also demonstrated that in neighborhoods where a majority of the families are of color, especially those with low income neighbors, members often share responsibilities such as child rearing, shopping, and even meals (Stack 1974, Patillo-McCoy 1999). Families of color also often place a high importance on assisting their families, neighbors, and community, often above themselves (Stack 1974, Gutman 1976).

These strategies have a long history. Herbert Gutman's (1976) research on the black family in and after emancipation, demonstrated the importance of the family structure and how non-blood relatives often were incorporated into the family, creating kinship networks and extending communities.

Analysis of habitus has been used infrequently in educational research in the United States, perhaps because of the difficulties in understanding habitus and how to measure it. Dumais (2002), who measured habitus quantitatively through the use of a student's orientation towards particular occupational types in order to illustrate a particular system of perception, is an exception.

The importance of family and community may be an essential aspect of the habitus of low-income and students of color; however, these values—and therefore important elements of the cultural capital and habitus of these students—are often undervalued. As Bourdieu suggests:

> One can put forward the hypothesis that the specific productivity of all pedagogic work other than the pedagogic work accomplished by the family is a function of the distance between the habitus it tends to inculcate…and the habitus inculcated by all previous forms of pedagogic work and, ultimately, by the family (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977:72).

Students begin with a foundation of habitus inculcated by their family and community. Pedagogic work may create a distance between a new habitus and the students' current habitus, or pedagogic work can affect their habitus to enhance rather than change it. For Bourdieu, it is the validation of the habitus and cultural capital of some groups rather than others that facilitates the reproduction of the hierarchies of the social structure in the educational process.

Implicit, and sometimes explicit, in many of the practices adopted by CPESS was an attempt to respect and even cultivate the values that were part of the habitus the students brought with them by creating an environment where the habitus of different groups were considered to be equal. CPESS directed structural alternatives and non-traditional "cultural arbitraries" toward fostering social relationships that emphasized family, community, and cooperation and opposed the reproduction of inequality through education.

RESISITING REPRODUCTION

Though interview respondents did not employ the language of cultural arbitraries and habitus, they and many teachers, administrators, parents, and

students who selected alternative schools, generally shared the view that the educational system has historically helped to reproduce, or at least has not significantly disrupted, inequalities of class, race and gender. Participants in alternative schools often see themselves as creating sites of resistance against the inequalities of society and their reproduction. Furthermore, these schools generally employ "progressive" pedagogical methods for liberation and to promote democracy (Freire 2003, Dewey 1997). One teacher explained:

> There was a combination of the Montessori things, of Freire, of Dewey. I think it was very eclectic, because we took what each of these people, the philosophies there, and applied them as best as we could. I think, though, that maybe for me, Freire was particularly important in his pedagogy of the oppressed. He talks about what was lacking. And so everything that was taught, for me, anyway, came from the notion that what can I fill in, or how to approximate a background that will allow people to express or to learn more – to learn the subject but also to express themselves through it. (Clarissa Edison, Humanities[32] teacher)

The idea of "education for resistance" has been the source of experimentation in the classroom for decades. The concept that students can be taught to resist social structures has led to the creation of a variety of different school types—including freedom and Afro-centric schools, as well as alternative schools. The premise is that these schools would create students who would reject various aspects of contemporary society in order to recreate it as more egalitarian. This chapter will examine the practices by which CPESS attempted to use three types of resistance—structural, pedagogical, and curricular—to create a place of resistance.

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[32] Teachers' subject areas will be identified by the general classification used in DI and II. Teachers who teach math and/or science in any of the three divisions will be identified as Math/Science teachers. All other subjects—history, social science, literature and art—will be classified as Humanities.

STRUCTURAL RESISTANCE

> Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it. Those truly committed to the cause of liberation can accept neither the mechanistic concept of consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled, nor the use of banking methods of domination (propaganda, slogans, deposits) in the name of liberation. Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world. "Problem-posing" education, responding to the essence of consciousness intentionality rejects communiqués and embodies communication. (Friere 1970:79)

Various scholars and writers have remarked on the many ways in which the social structure of the school mirrors that of society outside (Pope 2001). In the typical high school where these categories exist, students may be divided according to race, social class, sex, or athletic and intellectual prowess. Students are placed, or place themselves, in particular groups and then frequently lack the ability or interest to move out of those groups. The labels of the groups differ as does the dominance of one group over another, but the structure of the categories is very similar across schools (Eckert 1989): athletes or popular students, smart students, and sometimes a group of disaffected youth. Finally, there is the residual category—those students who are not particularly athletic or very smart or alienated from society—the “nobodies”, the ”in-betweeners” (Eckert 1989; Metz 1983; Ortner 2002; Barber, Eccles and Stone 2001).

Many of these groups are created based on demographic attributes with similar people having relationships with each other and excluding those who are different. Often, these clusters mimic the social categories found outside of

school—those who would have shared jobs or neighborhoods with each other share a high school social group (Eckert 1989), creating insular communities of students. The few interactions across these groups can be similar to the almost stereotypical relationships between the groups in the larger society, with animosity stemming from a lack of respect and the perceived power difference between the groups (Eckert 1989).These divisions then may both reflect and reproduce the external social structure, with students remaining segregated, albeit in "integrated" schools.

The CPESS advisory system, as previously discussed, sought to disrupt the formation of insular groups. Meier explains that the importance of advisory is "to have one adult who truly knows each kid AND family well and can make the needed connections, adjustments, course-corrections as kids maneuver their way through school and into life. It's also a place for kids to create a group that includes various different strands in the school—that cuts across kids' usual cliques (Meier 2003)." Students seem to agree as few interviewed had anything negative to say about their advisory experience as a whole.[33]

> I loved advisories because in advisory…it was the homeroom and that was the time when you got to meet up with your team and go over the latest current affairs, attendance, advisory trips…Let's make the plan. That was your homeroom and that was where you went back to. That was what you grew out of (Shane Rayburn).

> Aside from your regular classroom teachers, you had your advisors who in my eyes, it seemed to me, that his particular or her particular duty was to maintain stability in the academic process, emotional well-being and social interaction and that definitely made advisory more like a home than like what homeroom was in a traditional classroom. Homeroom

[33] Some students mentioned problems on advisory trips but they did not fault the advisory experience for that.

> wasn't so homey but in advisory, advisory was definitely more like a home (Vincente Ortega).
>
> It was a pretty weird component of the curriculum in that I felt like we never did much of anything in advisory and maybe that was because I had [my advisor] for a couple of years and he was really good at doing not much of anything. I think that I only have that feeling because I am an incredibly structured person and what I wasn't seeing was how much was going on in terms of interpersonal relationships and people sort of figuring out how to relate to and respect one another and so to me that's what advisory was really good for you know. Kind of throwing ten people into a room and forcing them to relate to each other (Kenneth Edward).

In fact, when asked to describe their first memory of CPESS, many students spoke about their advisory group. It is within that group that students formed the strongest bonds, some of which lasted long after advisory had disappeared from their lives. Far from being homogenous, advisories were composed (at least somewhat) randomly,[34] and as a result, there were diverse groups of students in each advisory who got to know each other in a way they might have been unlikely to in a more traditional educational institution. Advisory activities and trips enhanced relationships between advisees and advisors, as discussed below, and advisors encouraged interaction between their students, even if it sometimes seemed forced:

> [after being very upset about something] my advisor goes up to my advisory and basically my entire advisory comes up and pretends to be all nice to me because they all felt bad that I sat there and started crying and the entire Burger King turned around for some reason at that time and they all saw me crying so my advisory was really friendly to me the rest of the day, and it just seemed extremely fake (Joy Vernon).

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[34] One teacher commented that students were generally randomly distributed into different advisories. There was some concern about trying to keep students with a friend but also trying to create the opportunities for students to meet new friends. There were some teachers who were thought to be a good fit for certain students, and that was also taken into account.

Schools where classes are tracked by perceived ability often serve to separate middle class (usually white) students from their lower-class (usually minority) classmates. CPESS frowned upon tracking and practiced inclusion: this extended to students who might have been classified as in need of “special education” in other schools. By not ranking students by race, class or ability, the school emphasized an egalitarian perspective, which students reinforced inside the classroom. This and other structural innovations discussed in the previous chapter interacted with both pedagogical and curricular resistance to create an alternative to traditional educational structures.

PEDAOGOGICAL RESTISTANCE

Inside the classrooms, three pedagogical innovations served to create and reinforce a respectful community: supporting collaboration, developing mutual respect, and encouraging voice. While the existence of advisories placed students together, it was students’ academic classrooms that forced them to work together. Each class module, which often culminated in a presentation, included both individual and group work that was observed and evaluated by other classmates. Each student’s course assessment included both their individual contributions and their ability to work well with the other members of their group. Students frequently evaluated each other’s participation and involvement in group projects. Therefore, students had to learn to work with others, whoever they were, and to respect their relationship with their classmates, if for no other reason than that they were likely to work together again. Teachers sometimes noted that small groups, while providing the

opportunity for students to ask questions and work through problems on a much smaller stage, could also be detrimental as the smaller audience could foster distractions:

> Cecilia did experience some difficulties working in her cooperative group, and at times was easily distracted by her peers. As a result, the level of her work that she produced has declined (Evaluation D1 062290).

Yet students reported that their experiences in the small group were invaluable. One student now works in the corporate world:

> The groups were set up so that people were working together. There was a lot of working together at CPESS. People don't understand. They were building a collaborative effort before that was mandatory so people didn't really have to start later in life working with people. They already knew how to work with people, and that was fantastic, and that gave you social skills from the beginning. (Shane Rayburn)

> It takes a whole community to inculcate the expectation that one of the things you do when you're a student in a class is help other people. And I think that really did happen at CPESS, but it doesn't work in communities where that is not a norm. (Chiara Salvator, Math/Science teacher)

The teachers who encouraged and developed respectful and relatively egalitarian relationships with students also extended the respect to their own relationships with students. In an attempt to foster mutual respect, students referred to their teachers by their first names. This informality also signaled opposition to the banking method of education which is inherent in the dichotomy between teacher and student—teacher as depositor, student as bank. As Freire notes:

> The raison d'etre of libertarian education…lies in its drive towards reconciliation. Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students. (Freire 1970:72)

CPESS attempted to resolve this contradiction. One of the ten common principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools—many of which were considered in the creation of CPESS—placed the teacher in the position of the coach who assists the student through her education rather than someone who holds all the knowledge to distribute to students as deemed necessary. For CPESS teachers and students, this principle was reflected in the amount of responsibility given to students to create their projects,

> Because exhibitions were sort of like a project-based way of teaching, I evolved so I was almost never giving lessons, really. Kids were working on projects and I was like – a useful metaphor that was used was "teacher as coach." And so I was very often introducing materials, helping kids going forward with their projects. But the exhibition process was all individualized. (Dan Patton, Humanities teacher)

> We were doing predictions using linear equations and I remember that I created this character who was this absent minded woman who worked for some company, and she would just go around to people's houses making presentations on different things, and she was trying to explain to people why they should move before the dam exploded, and so she starts talking, and I put jokes in there, and then, basically, half of the town ends up flooding, and she's still trying to make a presentation while the town's flooding, and I used her in three or four different projects that I did (Joy Vernon).

To plan and implement advisory trips,

> Again it's the same concept of responsibility. Where perhaps it was foolish but these adults put like a ridiculous amount of trust into a group of teenagers and I honestly think that that was probably far more meaningful than actually seeing the colleges themselves…to have that feeling that a group of kids could actually be responsible for themselves, I think was really meaningful (Kenneth Edward, student).

And to participate in real internships dealing with serious jobs such as those with hospitals, government offices and schools.

> In 11th grade, I remember the internship was set up through my advisor. I set up an interview with the Photograph Center of Harlem. You know that spot? So I interned with a photographer (Ramon Quesada).
>
> I can remember in tenth grade that I worked in the ombudsman office down at One Centre Street and they gave me real people to talk to about housing. I mean its ridiculous how much responsibility they gave us. It's another one of those things that kind of seems fake when I look back on it because I can't believe that they would give kids so much power or such meaningful work, but it was incredible. Totally incredible (Kenneth Edward).

He added that this conveyed the view that:

> each of us as students had a real value and a real role in the school and I think as a result of that that we were each capable of doing amazing things, I think there was sort of an interesting self-help component to the school where we were really told over and over and over again that we were good people and that if we wanted to do something we could do it (Kenneth Edward).

The egalitarian model was also fostered by the attempts made to give the students a voice, and it communicated respect for their abilities and values. Because CPESS had very limited extra-curricular activities, they tried to integrate a range of experiences that may have occurred outside of the classroom in schools. Humanities classes, for example, beyond the use of group work and presentations also included mock trials, debates, and dramatic readings. These were often conducted in groups but could also be done by the entire class. The school required that each class member participate, and class members were in a position where their voices were heard. Myrna Glen currently works in higher education:

> We did mock trials [at CPESS]. We did actual interactive learning. That was a big deal. We weren't stuck sitting in a row at our desks (Myrna Glen).

> I'm not even sure I was that aware when I was doing it, but when you had to present, do a graduation presentation, or a presentation of a project, it meant that the student owned the project and became rather powerful in it. And therefore they were arguing from positions of strength, which is not the same when you just do a test. (Clarissa Edison, Humanities teacher)

In addition, through self-evaluations, students had to practice self-reflection and, again, include their own voice in the evaluations that went home to their families. They had the opportunity to discuss their progress, or lack thereof, their work, and their strengths and weaknesses.

Finally, they could leave their mark on the school through the voice they included in the yearbook. The yearbook was one of the school's few extra-curricular activities. Most schools have yearbooks, but at CPESS, each senior could design half a page. They could choose to share it with another student and get a full page or with three others and have a two-page spread. Students viewed it as their opportunity to decide how they would be remembered (see Appendix K for a sample).

INSTITUTION RITES

As is the case for all organizations, it is important to integrate new members into the school (Parsons 1951). CPESS recognized a need to strengthen the school's social capital[35] by fortifying networks among students. To accomplish this, CPESS used another pedagogical formulation—what Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron (1977) refer to as *institution rites.* The institution rites at CPESS began on the first days of school when participating in

[35] "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acceptance and recognition… (Bourdieu 1986:51)."

orientation. Students met classmates in advisory and other students for the first time. Both new students and veterans re/connected with each other and met the new students who would become their "family" for the year.

They reinforced relationships every year through the implementation of advisory trips. During the second term, two advisories visited a city located within an hour's distance of at least one college or university. Often, the students participated in planning their own trips, and at other times advisors planned their trips. The students spent three days and two nights outside of the city. These trips were especially important for low-income and minority students—some of whom had never left the city or considered college. Booker Percell's parents both terminated their educations after high school. He went on to pursue a graduate degree:

> That level of exposure to the college life at that age is not something that I would have gotten otherwise, and I'm sure a lot of other kids from our community would not have gotten otherwise…If we hadn't had those advisory trips to go on…being as young as thirteen years old and spending two days overnight somewhere outside New York City…I mean, I didn't go to camp when I was younger, I did cub scouts but we never did the overnight thing and so I don't think that I had ever been outside of the city overnight until the first advisory trip (Booker Percell).

Margaret Santos, who is now a teacher adds:

> We visited college and I think that was really important because it helped us start getting a vision of what we wanted. I don't think people do it anymore and it's a really sad thing because how else are you gonna know what you're gonna do and where you're gonna go and that college is really possible, if you don't see yourself there? If you don't have a vision of it? (Margaret Santos)

Advisory trips, while providing the opportunity for the deepening of social ties, also "planted a college seed" in students as young as twelve. For the first

four years, these trips exposed students to a different college environment every year—sometimes staying on campus, other times, at a local motel—as well as to a different group of students.

Between junior high and high school, there was another institutional rite—Moving Up Day. All students participated in this recognition ceremony, but the day took its title from the process of moving from D1 to D2 or D2 to SI. Other students referred to it as "Trophy Day" as it was also the day that athletes and scholars shared a stage and were recognized for their achievements with trophies and certificates.[36]

Aside from graduation, the tenth grade retreat was the last major institutional rite. In order to orient students to the social and academic expectations awaiting them in the Senior Institute, Division 2 students spent two days at a retreat in upstate New York to discuss projects, portfolios, and the new course schedule that students would face that September. Students also used the time to socialize with each other and the few eleventh and twelfth grade students who accompanied them.

Participation in advisory trips ended after the tenth grade but college trips did not. Students began then to select colleges to which they might apply, and visit them. These trips were not as socially integrative as the advisory trips (they were not usually overnight nor organized as an advisory), but students still had the opportunity to meet with others with similar educational aspirations.

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[36] An interesting side-note is that while both athletes and scholars received trophies, the athletic trophies grew to be significantly larger than the academic ones.

Finally, graduation, perhaps to the chagrin of some parents, continued to reinforce the egalitarian nature of the school. CPESS had no valedictorians or salutatorians, and, with the academic and athletic accolades given out days before, parents and families received no indication to mark their children as different in any way from each other. Every student who so desired could make a speech, which was often tearful for students, especially those like Bryan who began at the CPE family of schools in kindergarten:

> When [this one guy] spoke…I was like "god damnit! I wasn't gonna miss this place and now I'm gonna miss this place because of your big mouth and so that was a bittersweet memory (Bryan Ornell).

> [My last memory of CPESS was] that moment when after graduation was over and everybody would come back to the school for the little reception…and then finally your parents say "ok, are you ready to go?" And you know they're gonna take you out to eat. But that "are you ready to go?" because you don't realize it at the time that you're leaving. You don't have to go back there anymore for anything and so it's such a simple question and a seemingly innocuous one but it really isn't (Booker Percell).

Students' accounts often spoke of overcoming immense obstacles to graduate, including grave illness or death of caretakers. They were emotional occasions for students and family.

MAKE NEW FRIENDS…

According to teachers and administrators, these structural and pedagogical components were deliberate attempts to undermine the traditional, hierarchical social divisions common in other schools. Instead of the jocks, the nerds, the burnouts and the nobodies (Eckert 1989), most CPESS students occupied more than one social category.

So, though a student might consider herself a nerd, she also acknowledged: “it was like there was a doughnut and the popular group was the doughnut and the nerd was in the middle so it was a nerd group in the middle of this popular group and I was the only person in the nerd group.” (Joy Vernon). Vincente eventually transferred from the school. He explained:

> Well, that’s one thing I can say about CPESS. They didn’t reinforce the typical sectioning off of groups. You know, this group does this and that group does that and these two groups don’t mix, you know, it wasn’t like that at all. You know, like I said I was friends with a lot of the guys on the basketball team and I was friends with a lot of students who were academically goal orientated, and there was no difference between us. Depending on what your project was, we interacted just fine without showing any differences (Vincente Ortega).

> They were really good, really, really good relationships. Like I said, there are just a few girlfriends I still have now, to this day. And I was just – you know, always, like I said, I was kind of shy. Even just to meet them you know was sometimes a challenge, because just open up to somebody. They were good to me then, they’re good to me now. And just, in general, like everybody just seemed like they were family there. So I never got into any fights or anything. That just wasn’t my style. I developed some good friendships. (Theresa Needham)

Students discussed their ability to overcome the often rigid boundaries between jocks and others (Kinney 1993), and to participate in such activities as athletics. Kenneth, one member of the small population of white students, does not consider himself to be athletic but stated:

> Because of the sort of warped universe that we were living in, it seemed totally normal that I would be [on] the volleyball team…which still strikes me as hilarious but it was great because I felt like it was the first time that I felt like I could do something physical and actually have it be meaningful and that being athletic could actually make me happy…being on the volleyball team was one of the first ways that I realized that my body was really important to me and that I wasn’t just a brain and that my intellect wasn’t the only thing that was valuable in myself (Kenneth Edward).

According to the students, the malleability of these groupings added to the mutual respect and community bonds because students were recognized for who they were, rather than who they associated with.

> I had a very diverse group of friends. Racially and ethnically. I'm sure to a degree socio-economically although you don't know in high school…it wasn't until I got to CPESS that I had this educational experience which is racially mixed in any significant way. Hispanic, black, white, Asian, a few international students sprinkled in there. So, that was important too because by the time I got to college, the prospect of going to a predominately white school didn't phase me at all. I knew how to interact with people of different cultures and backgrounds and I think that's something that a lot of students struggle with when they go from high school to college (Booker Percell).

As Booker explained, though individuals brought distinct cultural experiences with them into the school, they were able to discover similarities through their differences and learned that these commonalities were present despite their differences. The structure of the school encouraged sharing human and cultural capital.

ON THE OTHER SIDE

CPESS was not without the problems of adolescent social relationships. Some students shared reports of the usual teasing and bullying that goes on in many schools.

> Half and half. As I got older and into more 11th and 12th grade, I became more of my own person and not as much affected by people around me but when I was younger, in like 7th and 8th grade, I would get teased a lot and stuff like that that put me into my own little world and I'd be very shy and wouldn't talk to people as much. (Kimberly Hawthorne).

> I never that I can remember had a real interpersonal conflict. There was a bully who was several years older than us who liked messed around with [us] for a couple of months but I don't even remember his name (Kenneth Edward)

> Like I said earlier when I first came into CPESS, I mean the junior high school, even though most of the school you know its more of a hippy kind of a thing you still have your elements where there are people who are going to bully other people and there were a particular group of people in my advisory who did not take a liking to me and I had conflicts with them on the regular either with them insulting me, me trying to defend myself, or being chased which was particularly embarrassing but whatever (Bryan Ornell).

Most students described their social problems as declining after junior high school; few of the problems lasted through the ninth grade, the freshman year of high school. To some extent, the heterogeneous grade groupings served both to decrease and encourage social division. As students moved from one division to the other, they were first in the younger—and often less popular—group, but by the next year they were part of the older—and often more admired—group in the division. Joy, who described herself as shy, explains:

> I guess because CPESS was organized in those heterogeneous groupings you had the good year when you were the older group so when you're in the…7th and then 9th grade and then 11th grade…you're sort of on the bottom and you kinda feel like you move back and forth between those two positions and it does kinda change the way you are viewed by other people and the way you see yourself and I think that when I was at the top I felt like I had much more positive experience then when I was at the bottom (Joy Vernon).

For those students who reported conflicts with others, the conflicts generally occurred when they were part of the younger group. The only group that did not report these problems were those in the first graduating class who "couldn't have been any more senior than [they] were" (Lynette Saadiq).

Interview responses of some students vacillated between reporting that the school had strong social divisions and describing it as a tight-knit family. For

the most part, these students were in the first two graduating classes, which seemed to be subject to some inconsistency.[37]

A VIEW FROM THE TOP: ATHLETICS AT CPESS

If CPESS can be said to have had any significant social divisions, it was the distinction between the boys' basketball team and the rest of the school. This team was the only group of students that some respondents labeled as a strictly bounded group.

> The boys' basketball team. I guess they were the closest that we came to idolized students at the school. But I really didn't feel like there were like the dumb kids, for example, like there were the kids that probably didn't care as much as they should have but it didn't feel like the school was so stratified that there was that group of kids who were like the fuck-ups (Kenneth Edward).

None of the other sports teams (CPESS had both boys' and girls' basketball, co-ed softball, boys' volleyball, and even bowling and track teams for a limited time) were specifically described in terms of a bounded group. Perhaps this distinction was due to the fact that the boys' basketball team might have been the most homogenous—primarily black and low income—of all the social groups in the school. One student described them as "those same types of hoodlums, not all of them, by no means all of them, but a lot of them… (Bryan Ornell)."

Additionally, while members of the basketball team seemed to easily move among groups, some also perceived the highest levels of group exclusivity. One

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[37] The specifics of the evolution of the school from class one to class five and beyond are outside the scope of this research but will be addressed in a subsequent work. It is important to add, however, that the social cohesion found in this school was very much a matter of process. Some students in earlier classes mentioned racial divisions among women but not men. Later classes cited demographic divisions less frequently, but a few referred to the sports teams when asked about divisions.

former student who was on the basketball team for several years claimed that he saw division everywhere he turned: “It wasn’t homogenous. People had quirks and they made alliances based on the quirks. There was the basketball quirk, a rap quirk, a white quirk—we had four white people, they had to stick together— a fat booty quirk…” But he added that he

> hung out with everybody. They had different lives and I was interested in everybody different…there was a sports crew, a nerd crew, an awkward crew, a wrestling crew, there was a handball crew…there were the fighters, there were the people who couldn’t fight so I defended them. I hung out with everybody…(Shane Rayburn).

CURRICULAR RESISTANCE

The process of inculcating a new habitus in students often involves delegitimizing the previous habitus. In other words, the “cultural arbitraries” that students are taught in many schools often serve to downgrade or devalue their culture by limiting their exposure—black history for one month, for example—or not giving it any place in the curriculum (Smith-Maddox 1998). These curricular choices, such as teaching European history and ignoring Latin America and Africa, or limiting the scope of literature to European or other white writers, selects cultural arbitraries deemed important and denies access to others. CPESS embraced alternative curricula, choosing to deemphasize some of the more traditional subjects and instead, teaching what were traditionally thought to be more marginalized areas. Science and math were somewhat more traditional,[38] than the humanities but still maintained some alternative aspects:

[38] Math and science education were the subjects of conflicts. This is outside the scope of this chapter but is discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

> And math, and having it all combined [into one class]. And no other kids I knew were learning about Mayan math because they were learning Mayan civilization. Do you know what I mean? (Olivia Wright, student)

The first two years of the curriculum included not only traditional American history, emphasizing the American Revolution and the Civil War but also topics such as the civil rights movement, Taino and Navajo culture, Central America, immigration and migration (forced and voluntary). These topics were considered to be as important, if not more, as the more traditional sub-topics generally taught in American History.

This change in emphasis was achieved through the focus of courses around Essential Questions rather than particular content. Meier explains:

> That was straight from Ted Sizer's book, and from the work of a man named Grant Wiggins. I think he since developed a book titled "Learning By Design" which has that idea. In other words, that you start by asking some big question that can't be resolved by a yes or no, and that there might be factual questions underneath it, but it wasn't just a question you could look up and answer. And then there was the curriculum itself. And we decided then that the curriculum had to be something where you could practice the five Habits of Mind and to which you could ask Essential Questions. Was big enough to ask some questions. And it was also deep enough so you could use Habits of Mind, could practice them (Deborah Meier).

Essential Questions provided students with the opportunity to learn about themes of inquiry and various historical events related to those themes: problem-posing education as emphasized by Freire.

Equally important in approaching these larger problem areas was the selection of themes and subjects that resounded with the culture and experiences of the student population. Themes like justice, identity, power, and worldview developed in students the ability to use a variety of viewpoints and

evidence to illustrate particular concepts. Students were not only presented with the Habits of Mind—connections, perspective, evidence, speculation and significance—but the school sought to demonstrated how they were used.

> I felt like the Habits of Mind were [a] really strong intellectual tool for me as not only a teacher, but I remember I was going to graduate school at that point in time, and going, "Oh! These are the thinking skills that you need to use to apply to just looking at whether it was sociology or women's studies." It just gave me a real clear sense of what it was, how to approach any book, any topic, and be able to dissect it in a clear kind of way. Then, in terms of, once I kind of got my feeling about how I was going to use, I was able to use them as a humanities teacher to break down, let's say, an essay. Or how to approach primary source material. Or secondary source material, how to use it to improve kids' understanding of social studies. And I eventually came to better understand how to use them for literature, as well. (Ellen Donald, Humanities)

Eleventh and twelfth grade, where students could select their own schedules (and humanities was broken into smaller subject blocks), provided more content-based options for students' education. In addition to the college course that the school required each student to take, there were courses offered such as Rethinking Columbus, The War in Vietnam, and South Africa. English courses were more traditional with Hamlet and The Theban Trilogy. Many students, especially African American women, spoke extremely fondly about, a course on Toni Morrison—where students read and discussed *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Song of Solomon*. Olivia Wright, now working in the service industry, remembers:

> I remember being introduced to the writings of Toni Morrison by Pat Wagner...that was profound for me. Toni Morrison is now my favorite author and taking that class truly inspired me to write. (Olivia Wright)

By including options such as these in their curriculum, CPESS administrators and teachers consciously presented an alternative to the cultural arbitraries

presented in other institutions as well as giving value to the habitus, values, and culture of the minority students who make up the majority of their population.

One of the reoccurring themes in the evolution of CPESS' alternative structure was the difficulty the school confronted in relating to the traditional system within which it existed (discussed in more detail in the next chapter). The curriculum was an aspect of this disconnect for some students. They knew a great deal about more marginalized cultures than many of their counterparts from other schools, but they reported not having the similar depth of knowledge of European or even "mainstream" American culture. Their knowledge of traditional literature topics such as Shakespeare was also limited. One student, who has completed a post-graduate degree, explains:

> [My parents] felt that was lacking from CPESS. They felt that the tilt that CPESS gave towards not studying the classics was above and beyond what – I mean, they came from a very classical education that had been pretty British in its orientation. So they thought that some sort of supplementing was needed to get things like Greek history, things like that. Things that would be taught in traditional history classes, but that CPESS didn't have. (Linus Ford)

> Number two [of what seemed to be missing when I entered college] is knowledge of some basic subjects that are assumed in college, for instance, American and European history, which I wouldn't say was ignored, but in order to give equal weight to the histories of alternative cultures, it wasn't focused on as much (Frank Huerta).

Teachers, however, defended the course content:

> I think that they got good information and good critical thinking skills around the areas that we covered. Did we cover it all? No. That was deliberate. That was no accident. We knew that we couldn't cover it all. That was the whole mission of the school. I mean, when I went to high school, we never got past World War I. So our mission was to provide critical thinking skills in specific areas, specific kind of flashpoints in history. And that's what we did. So that kids, when they got to college, and would have maybe more breadth, could also use that knowledge,

use that lens, and go, “Oh, this is kind of like when we studied power in America in the 7th and 8th grade.” Or “This is kind of like when we studied what happens when cultures interact. Oh, look at what happens when Japan goes into China during World War 2.” So what we wanted to do is to make sure that we would leave an impact in the areas that we covered as opposed to covering large areas of American history. So I would say no, we didn’t cover huge amounts of world history, and huge amounts of American history. But that was a deliberate choice that we made. So that we could instill critical thinking skills. (Ellen Donald, Humanities)

When a lot of kids say my math skills were lacking, they were doing that based on what happened to them after they left. Right? They’re measuring that based on what was required when they left. The unfortunate thing is that if you’re doing new stuff with kids, the rest of the world has not necessarily caught up and they are still testing them according to ways that we don’t think were accurate or fair. So, I’m aware of the struggle a lot of kids had when they went into the “real world” because we were basing our math curriculum on things that were going on at the time in the late 80s, early 90s…when they got out they were hit with a lot of tests that involved a lot of jargon, a lot of terms that they were not used to knowing—although, if they knew what the terms meant, they would understand what it was. They’re also forced to take classes with teachers in college that were not necessarily teaching in the most up-to-date manner, doing a lot of lecturing, doing a lot of going from the book and that’s another thing. Our students were not used to working out of a textbook, they were not used to doing that. Now in hindsight, I think it is important to be able to read a math textbook. I think it’s important to know the terminology so I would…do it over. I would do things differently. But kids when they left my class were stronger in math then they were when they came in, I know that. The Senior Institute, as far as I know had a pretty strong math program as well. You would not be exposed to the type of teaching that we did until you got into the higher math classes…when you get into the higher math classes, it’s more a project-oriented thing. The professor will give you a problem, “prove this. This is what we know so far” and over the course of two or three days, you work with your classmates and you try to get a proof, you submit the proof to the professor. The professor reads it, points out what’s wrong says “here, try again, revise it.” And that’s more in line with the way we were teaching but most kids would not have been exposed to that unless they actually chose to go into mathematics. They were being confronted with basically standardized tests which, as you know, we didn’t give at Central Park East, we had a variance. So, I would say yes we did not prepare you for the way math is taught outside of our school. Sorry. (Jim Geneva, Math/Science)

Low income and minority students, who are so often silent in schools, reported that CPESS gave them a voice. In school, they planned and implemented walk-outs, protests and demonstrations.

> When the Rodney King thing came up, people immediately wanted to respond to that. So there was this political awareness. And some other incident. I think there were a few other incidences where people were like, “Yeah, let’s go march.” And then Jose would gather a bunch of kids and they’d go march. And it was like, that’s exactly what education is supposed to be about. (Ellen Donald, teacher)

The former students’ responses to the survey question about the strengths of CPESS were fairly uniform: the strong social relationships—many between students who might not have been friends otherwise—the fostering of community and cooperation, the body of work they created and the subjects they learned that friends in other schools did not. They are now involved in a variety of occupations and many participate in community work within and outside of their employment (this will be discussed further in the next chapter). Many report continuing to fight the reproduction of social hierarchies in their lives.

Though resisting the reproduction of social hierarchies may not have always been a manifest function (see next chapter), the structure of this school was designed to cultivate the cultural capital and habitus of students whose values are usually rejected by the system. By treating the values of community and cooperation as equal to more traditional values such as individual aspiration, CPESS sought to teach their students to adhere to those values.

Fostering respect and friendship inside the classroom is one thing. Placing 14 to 20 year old students in a room and making them work together does not a

friendship make. More important perhaps is what happens to these fourteen to twenty year olds outside of the walls of their school once they have graduated.

Ten to fifteen years later, many graduates cite their relationships with other students and teachers at CPESS as one of the most important things about the school. They point to the community of friends created at CPESS as contributing to the social groups within which they now exist. Most students who participated in the survey still maintain some level of contact with friends from their primary group, which were often relatively heterogeneous by class and race. Several students interviewed indicated that they are still in contact with one or more teachers from the school or former students outside of their primary group.

> The brothers were my brothers and the sisters were my sisters…and the people who I was close with, I was tight with, I'm still tight with today…when I walk up to somebody on the streets from CPESS, we hug and we have conversations as if we was in CPESS. I saw [someone] last night. We was talking…we was still carrying on the conversation from the last time we met…I saw [someone else] tonight. I ran into [a third person] and we hugged which is a fantastic feeling (Shane Rayburn).

Though those involved in contemporary public educational institutions today are unlikely to claim that their school functions to maintain the stratification structure of society by using cultural arbitraries to reproduce inequalities, these alternative schools acknowledge the ways in which educational institutions assist in maintaining stratification—and take specific measures to address the issue of cultural arbitraries. CPESS consciously attempted to undermine the current banking method of education. They attempted to introduce problem-posing education and to organize the curriculum around community concerns, taking a page from Freire (1997).

In this chapter, I argued that CPESS attempted to undercut the rigid social structure supported by most schools through a transformation of the more traditional forms of structure, pedagogy and curriculum. The faculty and administrators at the school attempted to practice resistance in those areas to create a space for students to escape the hierarchy they faced outside of the schools. The following chapter will expand this into an analysis of the school's other goals and its ability to reach them.

Chapter 5

Goooooooals!

The Goals of Alternative Schools

In the course of "selling" a pilot program to provide monetary incentives to elementary and junior high school students, New York City Schools Chancellor Klein shared his own motivations for achievement in school "I wanted my parent's approval…I found education interesting and exciting and I engaged it in those terms. I thought education would create opportunities my family didn't have. My father said if you want to grow up and not live in public housing, pay attention in school" (Berger 2007). Here again Klein emphasized the importance of goals in schooling. Though goals concerning social mobility are key to the education of low-income and minority students, the pedagogical structure and philosophy of New York City alternative schools are inspired by a range of other goals. Preceding chapters have examined the structure (means) of Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS). This chapter will focus on the goals of the organization, the effectiveness of CPESS in achieving those objectives and how they influenced former CPESS students.

Robert Merton (1957) suggests five ways in which means and goals interact—producing four modes of adaptation that occur when individuals cannot meet the goals of a society within its accepted means. To Merton, those who accept both the goals and the means are conformists, those who reject the means while accepting the goals are innovators, those who accept only the means are ritualists, those who reject both means and goals are retreatists and

those who reject both means and goals and replace them with their own are rebels.

Mode of Adaptation	Institutionalized Means	Cultural Goals
I. Conformity	+	+
II. Innovation	-	+
III. Ritualism	+	-
IV. Retreatism	-	-
V. Rebellion	-/+	-/+

Table 1
Merton's Strain Theory

In some sense, educators at CPESS are conformists. They stand by the importance of primary, secondary and post-secondary educations. They assist their students through the means of secondary school to the goal of graduation and college. However, in relationship to more traditional forms of education, CPESS can be placed squarely in the fifth category—rebellion. Like Merton's rebels, they are not only interested in rejecting the means and goals but replacing them with another.

> [It is] a transitional response seeking to institutionalize new goals and new procedures to be shared by other members of the society. It thus refers to efforts to change the existing cultural and social structure rather than to accommodate efforts within this structure. (Merton 1957:194)

This is not an easy task—trying to implement an educational rebellion from inside a public secondary school. These schools must function within the state's traditional educational system all the while trying to produce an alternative to it.

> I remember when I was still in Division 2, and – you might think this unresponsive on my part, but I was annoyed that we started getting feedback from graduates that kids couldn't do lecture courses. They weren't really habituated to listening to lectures. I think some Senior Institute teachers started doing that. I was like, "This is wrong!" It's hard

> enough to get kids to use their mind, I don't think we should have colleges dictate to us what we consider to be the needs of our kids. Because you don't want children lectured to. That's – conservatives think teaching is almost always good, teacher-centered lecturing. In fact, universities have imposed a lot of the conservative things on schools that CPESS is trying to break away from (Dan Patton, Humanities).

Despite the practices within their classrooms, CPESS educators themselves would not necessarily publicly state that they were trying to change the system, but rather were interested in ensuring a quality education for their students. "Well, I've always had the same position," explains Meier, in a previously quoted excerpt from her interview with me, "I mostly want it to be good for kids who are there--those kids. That's its first obligation. Do no harm and, if possible, do some good. And then keep your fingers crossed that it might change the world also."

Teachers and students also felt constrained because since alternative schools are still greatly outnumbered by more traditional systems, the students CPESS produces must eventually return to a system within which the school and its "habitus" are not well integrated. As Bryan explains

> Just from the small conversations that I've had with people who have graduated from [CPESS], they've had great difficulties, you know, as far as making that adjustment from CPESS and how you are in there and that whole pampering and nurturing "oh, its okay," to "welcome to the real world. You don't pass class, get the hell out—we kick you out." So a lot of students had a lot of trouble with that so, I think that the marriage between the world as we know it and this whole hippy CPESS world that we had going on should have been more so and that would have been better. A pain in the ass for students but better (Bryan Ornell, student).

This disconnect between traditional and alternative educational outcomes and models has become increasingly visible as other institutions have also begun to consider alternatives. For example, *Washington Monthly* recently published their list of the top colleges in the nation. In contrast to a similar list popularized by *US*

News and World Report—which ranks schools by variables such as retention rate, standardized test scores, class sizes, acceptance rates and alumni giving rank—*Washington Monthly*'s ranking seeks to redefine the measures which have been traditionally used to identify a successful school. While existing college rankings are designed "to help overwhelmed parents and students sift through the thousands of colleges and universities in this country by giving them some yardstick for judging the 'best' schools" (2005:1), the staff at *Washington Monthly* "came up with three central criteria: Universities should be engines of social mobility, they should produce the academic minds and scientific research that advance knowledge and drive economic growth, and they should inculcate and encourage an ethic of service" (2005:2). Many of the *US News and World Report*'s top ten schools ranked dramatically lower on *The Washington Monthly* list. Similarly, alternative schools judged by the measures of traditional schools may not look the same as when they are measured by their own goals. CPESS' own educational goals, however, may be closer to what is important "for the country".

Central Park East Secondary School replaced traditional goals and means with alternatives that the administration and teachers believed would better prepare their students for the lives the students want to live. *The Cardinal Principles of Education*—a report written in 1918—developed a framework which became the foundation for the goals of most high schools. It stated that the purpose of schooling was to "develop in each individual the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits and powers whereby *he will find his place* and use that place to

shape both himself and society toward even nobler ends" (Ballantine 2001:136, italics mine). In opposition to these goals, alternative schools in New York—CPESS among them—created their own goals as embodied in the Division of Assessment and Accountability's *Annual School Reports* and the schools' descriptions on the websites of CES and NYPSC. The manifest—or official—functions of alternative schools include:

- Creating intellectuals
- Teaching effective communication
- Creating critical thinking citizens
- Promoting compassion and creativity
- Encouraging involvement in society and community
- Achieving mastery in life and educational skills
- Creating life-long learners
- Creating leaders
- Promoting education for the sake of personal satisfaction
- Preparing students for the "next step"

Implicit in these goals are three general principles that illustrate the functions that those who created and maintained the alternative school mission designed their schools to accomplish: to create public intellectuals, to create democratic citizens, and to prepare students for the "next step". These principles differ significantly from the 73 percent of high schools in Manhattan that list their goals in *The Directory of Public High Schools 1999-2000* as academic rigor, Regents curriculum, and/or college preparation (The New York City Board of Education 1999).

The failure of much of the research on alternative schools has been its inability to measure distinct outcomes such as creating democratic citizens**.** Instead alternative schools have been assessed in books, articles and reports by

the same variables as other schools. However, equally as important are those results that are more in line with the stated goals of the school.

BRINGING THE PUBLIC BACK IN

According to Weber (1946), intellectuals are a "group of men (sic) who by virtue of their peculiarity have special access to certain achievements considered to be 'culture values,' and who therefore usurp the leadership of a 'culture community'" (176). While Weber's view of intellectualism centers on men who use their specialized knowledge to "propagate the 'national idea,'" he also discusses their achievements and their ability to be leaders of their communities. Former CPESS students recognize both the community aspects of intellectualism and its more basic attributes of the constructive use of knowledge. When asked how they interpreted the mission of the school, forty percent of students interviewed used words like "teach us to use our minds well" and "encourage critical thinking":

> I think, simply put, it would be to make independent, responsible thinkers. I think it was sort of drilled into us over and over again that we could engage with anything that we wanted to but then, along with that, there was a very clear sense of having a duty to yourself and to the community around you. You know to think thoughtfully and ethically. Yes, we didn't talk much about ethics but I kind of felt like that was behind everything that we were doing (Kenneth Edward).

> To get students to use their minds well. That was the most important thing for them, I thought (Booker Percell).

Teachers provided similar descriptions of the school's goals:

> Well, I think the official goals were the ones I actually took seriously, which were to create people who could use their minds well. And using the mind well was defined by imbuing the Habits of Mind. (Dan Patton, Humanities)

Educators view these objectives as contrasting sharply with goals that are characteristic of traditional schools. Ted Sizer (1984) describes an example of the goals of a traditional school in *Horace's Compromise*:

> Franklyn High School has a statement of goals, but it is as vague as it is hortatory and conventional. The goals connect only rhetorically with the formal Course of Study. The latter is laid out by course and grade and is usually cast as a list of ideas, classics to be read, facts, skills, procedures, and qualities of character to be admired, opportunities to stock one's mind. Simply, the curriculum, however artfully described, is a listing of what the *teachers* will do, what "things" the kids will be "exposed" to. The students remain invisible, lumped in their age-graded cohorts, ready to watch the teachers' parade of things. (Sizer 1984:6)

The goals of many schools emphasize discrete aspects of curriculum. Conversely, a catch phrase several teachers at CPESS used was "we teach students, not curriculum." One student noted that a humanities class "kind of started [him] off, I guess, as an intellectual person in the school" (Bryan Ornell). Another student added:

> That was one of the first times that I thought of myself as a thinking person. I mean, my parents talk ad nauseam about being intellectual, you know, what that means but I never really got it, and that was one of the first times that I ever had that sense of being a person who thinks about things and has ideas (Kenneth Edward).

In examining some of the principles of CPESS, Meier explains what being an intellectual required of both teachers and students:

> One was that teachers had to be generalists and know students and not see themselves as only devoted to their particular academic discipline. And that they were interested in how kids and adults thought—intellectual life in general. And they happened to have specialized in one particular field, but they were interested in the life of the mind, if you want. Because one of Ted Sizer's principles was that the purpose of the school is to help young people learn to use their minds well. And he didn't mean it just academically or in any particular academic [discipline], but the idea that we have intellectual capacities that are normally not tapped, and that all human beings have such intellectual possibilities.

What CPESS administrators and teachers mean by intellectual training includes inculcating the Habits of Mind and teaching students to be critical thinkers and to use their minds well. While many popular and academic definitions of an intellectual include a value judgment, the pedagogy at CPESS applied a definition closer to that found in the dictionary. *Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*, for example, defines an intellectual as an individual who is "given to study, reflection and speculation" and "engaged in activity requiring the creative use of intellect" while the *American Heritage New Dictionary* defines an intellectual as "a person who engages in academic study or critical evaluation of ideas and issues." These definitions encompass the intent of the Habits of Mind—evaluation of evidence, significance and speculation—that all CPESS students were encouraged to implement in their school and homework everyday. They also include the idea of voice. When asked if they remembered the Habits of Mind, answers ranged from "Oh…no. That's horrible. I remember Habits of Mind but I don't honestly remember what they were. That's horrible." (Julia Juarez) to:

> It was sort of similar to the who, what, when, why and how's but it was about perspective and who's perspective it was about. What's the evidence? It was about who said what and why did they say it and their perspective on the subject matter was based on what facts. You know what I'm saying? How did that person come about thinking like that? Who is this person? Why is this person acting like this? What factors contributed to that? What's your evidence? (Shane Rayburn)

Only sixteen percent of students interviewed could specifically name the Habits of Mind, yet 74 percent of students could describe what they were and

felt that the habits of mind were so ingrained that while they could not necessarily name them, they felt they used them every day.

> I don't know the habits of mind off the top of my mind, but I use them anyway. I think that's more important than being able to say what the five or seven habits of mind are. It's the fact that you can implement them when you're reading, having discussions, when you're trying to convey your point. I think you are that much stronger, but also working with kids and trying to develop clear critical thinking, relying back on the habits of mind. The habits of mind are the habits of somebody who's being critical about the mind, critical in the sense of trying to understand what's going on. I think that's what CPESS did very well (Ramon Quesada).

Former students also demonstrated their ability to think critically as they discussed their own mistakes and detours in their lives subsequent to CPESS. Julia Juarez currently works in an elementary school:

> I don't think it was a good [educational path]. I feel like I could have done a lot more. It would have took a lot of balancing but I definitely could have done a lot better than I did. I wish I would have took a different path. I'm not proud of the paths that I took educationally (Julia Juarez).

Aleshia Kelwood's post-secondary education took place at two large schools, one a private college, one a state school:

> I regret not completing college. The pay that I receive is adequate, but I'm not passionate about what I do. That tells me that I'm in the wrong field. But, with two children, going back to college will be difficult (Aleshia Kelwood).

Beyond the imposition of the habits of mind, the attention given to alternative cultural and curricular arbitraries, as described in the last chapter, appear to contribute to students' ability to become intellectual. Bourdieu's analysis concludes that schools which strongly emphasize traditional arbitraries also limit their students' ability to question those arbitraries. What is taught in those schools is often considered "objective truth":

> The more directly a pedagogic agency reproduces, in the arbitrary content that it inculcates, the cultural arbitrary of the group or class which delegates to it its [pedagogic authority], the less need it has to affirm and justify its own legitimacy (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977:29).

The space to question and be critical is most apparent when students learn alternative arbitraries. In alternative schools, the teachers must continually justify their curriculum choices, and students learn the importance of questioning and may use it to criticize the school in their requests that curriculum be explained and interrogated.

> I remember at one point, [three of us] were actually very dissatisfied with the level of educational returns of mathematics or certain subjects. We felt that it was deficient and it needed more…so we actually half-way had some kind of semi-movement that lasted all of two weeks or whatever to kind of change that (Bryan Ornell).

The development of voice as part of the definition of intellectuality was promoted by other aspects in the CPESS curriculum. The openness of CPESS' exhibition and portfolio processes encouraged students to realize their creativity in the presentation of their work. When asked about their portfolios, students emphasized the opportunity to tailor their work to their interests:

> I also liked that for my fine arts portfolio I put in stories that I had written over the course of high school and that basically each of my portfolios was kind of individually tailored to me (Joy Vernon).

> Portfolios?...wow…wow…well there were 14 general subjects. It was time to be creative and go at it but I was the type that I was like "I want Ds because I want the trophies." So, I was on it from the beginning. I was into sports and I was into math and I was into reading and I was into writing and I was into poetry and I was into comic books and I was into cooking. I was trying to live. I was into chemistry so it was it was exciting…Everything about it was beautiful. Everything about it was unique. Your portfolios were a reflection of you. It was it was beautiful (Shane Rayburn).

Former students report carrying that creativity into their later education and work careers, making creative decisions about their schooling and occupations based on distinct elements of their human capital and individual personalities. Rather than allowing traditional fields and majors to dictate their path through education, some former students found more creative solutions to satisfy their diverse interests.

> I was interested in sort of finding more of a balance between my mind and my body, and the combination of the mind, the body and the spirit is something that is particularly intriguing to me and massage was like a very concrete way to talk about all three things and to experience all three things (Kenneth Edward).

Vincente describes his decision to pursue a degree in game design:

> I want to own my own company and have a decent team of game programmers and artist under me and be able to create concepts and premises for games where I can hand off to my staff and we, as a company, could produce solid games…. It encompasses everything that I've ever enjoyed. I've always been an artist…I also like to create games…. Aside from that, it also gives me an opportunity to write, as far as coming up with stories, back stories and plots and themes for the game…so it allows me to do mostly everything that I've ever wanted to do all-in-one. (Vincente Ortega)

Much of the criticism of contemporary intellectuals takes issue with the academy because of the distance it puts between mainstream society and the "ivory tower." The idea of the public intellectual is an attempt to address these issues. Richard Posner has defined a public intellectual as "a person who, drawing on his intellectual resources, addresses a broad though educated public on issues with a political or ideological dimension" (2001:170). A public intellectual uses language that is understood by the educated public to educate those outside of academia.

Explicit in the goals of CPESS is that its students develop into public intellectuals; at CPESS, the public aspect of this was centered on working towards change in the community. The administration at CPESS, and other alternative schools, emphasized the importance of service work to their students. One teacher explained:

> I think that the norm of "You should serve society in some good way." I think that was a strong message that came through. But I think also there was an understanding that there was a real diverse spectrum of ways to do that. You're supposed to serve your community, but you can do that in a number of ways. (Chiara Salvator)

The school's community service program placed twelve to sixteen year-olds in positions to try to make a difference in their communities and in their schools. "The philosophy behind this program is that students are part of a larger community, and they should participate in and benefit from regular community service" (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory 1994). Through this program, students began the process of the integration of their intellectual abilities and service work—creating a public intellectual orientation for each student.

> I think it's important to have students engage in some [community service] . . . some form of contributing to your community, whatever that is, whether it's the school community, whether it's the local community, whether it's the greater New York community. You're from New York. So I think community service is a huge, huge, huge thing. I think the more kids, I mean, if I did a school, I would try to make the placements as meaningful as possible (Ramon Quesada, student).

> I thought that was good. I thought we needed that. Social outreach is important and some people don't have it. They don't even have a notion that we are all responsible for each other. So, since they don't participate in it, they are out of touch with that whole we-are- one as a whole. That was a key component. The essential questions and community service made me form globally formidable opponents—at least that's what they

> thought, because they wanted to compete against me. (Shane Rayburn, student)

While some students had problems with their community service placements, citing a lack of choices and no opportunity to discuss and examine their work, most students were very positive about their internships. The inclusion of a portfolio on their internship forced students not only to consider the subject from an academic perspective, but often to integrate it with other subjects/portfolios and present the work. Frank currently works for a publishing company:

> The community service, I didn't like, the internship, I did. And I'll try to explain why. Community service felt, I mean it was mostly assigned to you…With internship, they actually did listen to your feedback about what you wanted to do and it also would allow you to pursue something more interesting and perhaps work a little more closely with the organization you were doing the internship with. I felt that was a great experience… I believe the science [portfolio] spun out of my internship in which I discussed a technique for—what's the word I'm looking for?—PCR is what its called and its kind of a technique for taking a little bit of genetic material and sort of multiplying it. At the time, it was kind of a, I don't think it was that new but it was sort of seen as a very kind of revolutionary technique that now is used very much (Frank Huerta).

An early innovation in the school was an internship seminar which gave students the opportunity to discuss their placements. The seminar, portfolios, and discussions that happened in advisories assisted students in concretizing the relationship between their intellectual work and their service to the community.

> I loved community service when I got a community service site that I liked and then when I didn't, I really hated it because it felt boring and I felt like it was dragging on. I remember doing internships. I think I did, like, two internships and it was fine. It was nice to be able to have an internship before you left high school and that was also the thing about the advisor. I remember Shirley making us write about our community service and our internship. Other advisors didn't do that so you kind of forgot about the experience. (Margaret Santos)

If nothing else, community service and internship seemed to provide the students with valuable work experience which made their job and college applications stand out from others.

> [On Community Service] I sort of thought the idea was nice, that people should have some practical skills. I originally thought of it as practical skills. They should know how to type and answer the phone – they should know how to do things that they could, if necessary, get a job (Deborah Meier).

> He was able to get me an internship at a law school with Barry Scheck… he has a defense program now where he helps get these people off of death row. And I was an intern in the office. And so that's awesome! And my original aspirations were to be a lawyer. I thought that was what I wanted to do, and the fact that I was able to see those things and get that exposure and experience. I wish now, as an adult, I wish I had taken even more advantage of that opportunity. But that's a great aspect of it. Because it does give you – again, teaches you responsibility. You have to get there on time. You have to balance your school life and that life. Those kinds of things you have to be responsible for. So I think that's a great aspect and I hope they are still doing it in Senior Institute. (Olivia Wright, student)

> The experience was good. Outside of the internship I wouldn't have had the opportunity to be in a hospital and see different procedures done and learn about different procedures. I wouldn't have had an opportunity to be able to work with kids and that actually gave me a decent amount of experience so that when I went for my first job, I got it (Julia Juarez, student).

> I think it was very useful, particularly in some experiential parts, writing college essays, experiencing some things, having a resume or some kind of a student resume about your experience. I think it makes your college application process that much better. I mean, just in the straight kind of academic and going to the next level part, but just in terms of life experience (Ramon Quesada, student).

Their experiences often stimulated their interest in work that could become their occupations. For example, Julia, who participated in internships and community service at both hospitals and elementary schools, said her dream job would be "The hospital. I guess in labor and delivery [because] I like helping people and I

like being able to make people feel comfortable because in that environment it's not the easiest place for people to feel comfortable and I just like to care for people."

CPESS seems to have been effective in providing an intellectual base for their students: 39 percent of those interviewed said that the most important thing they took away from CPESS is their critical thinking skills; and 90 percent of those surveyed said that they gained the skill of *critical reading*, 88 percent said they learned *analytic thinking* and 85.7 percent said *critical thinking* was learned at CPESS, at least "a little."[39] One student admitted he did not perceive the importance of all of CPESS' lessons but still, like his classmates, felt that:

> Project work is high-level stuff, critical thinking, developing that kind of understanding is, to me, very high-level stuff. It's very hard. You don't even get that at college, for most people (Ramon Quesada).

Students also appeared to have received the message on the importance of service learning. While only 25 percent of survey respondents stated explicitly that they were currently involved in community-based organizations, several others had integrated helping others into their daily life. Former students have developed socially conscious clothing lines or started low-cost summer camps. Thirty-five percent of students surveyed were involved in the traditional helping professions that include teaching and medicine: 92.2 percent rated *helping others who are in difficulty* as either very important or somewhat important in their lives. As Shane explains, students took what CPESS gave them and shared it:

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[39] The survey options were *a little, well, or not at all*.

> I was into being intelligent. I was into being smart. I was into being street smart. I was into being knowledgeable. So, CPESS gave me the essential questions to out think anybody, since I was a street hustler. Small time drug dealer, you know, never touched a drug. I was around grown adults but I was outthinking them. I was teaching people on the streets how to read. I was teaching homeless guys how to count, how to read, you know what I'm saying. The skills that I had at CPESS, I gave away because they gave me more than grown men had and I had to share that with them (Shane Rayburn).

Despite this individual describing himself as a drug dealer and hustler, he in some ways was also an intellectual who shared his knowledge with people who did not have access to it. While perhaps not entirely using his knowledge for the betterment of others, he does seem to "preserves great ideas of the past, communicates them, and creates new ideas. [An intellectual] is the 'world's eye.' And he communicates his ideas to the world, not just to fellow intellectuals" (Lightman 2004). The CPESS model seems to extend beyond traditional definitions of public intellectuals to include service work and a role in transforming society. It is more in keeping with Antonio Gramsci's notion of organic intellectuals who emerge from the working class, are aware of their subordinated position, and seek to resist the reproduction of social hierarchies (1999). This combination of perspectives was closer to the type of intellectuals that CPESS attempted to produce.

CITIZEN OF THE PLANET

The second most popular interview response (14%) when students were asked the mission of the school was "creating effective and productive citizens." According to Meier and other teachers, CPESS expected its students to become part of a citizenry that would cultivate cooperation and encourage change.

> They would also make choices based not only on their own benefit, but the larger society. The school would also imbue some democratic aspirations (Deborah Meier).
>
> The stronger students could, by explaining material to kids in their group who didn't understand it, achieve a greater mastery of it. Maybe achieve some kind of fulfillment from having clarified stuff for the other, weaker students. And also learn what it is to be a good citizen, helping other people along (Chiara Salvator).

This cooperation stands in contrast to the competition and individualism often emphasized in more traditional settings. In describing their experiences, several students expressed appreciation for the family- and community-modeled relationships they formed in the school. The values of community, cooperation, and family came out in several of the student surveys and interviews. Rafique graduated from a large, public university:

> [One teacher] was like an extended family member. He played a strong role in my social development outside of the home…and, in some ways, knows aspects of me better than my family (Rafique Coleman).
>
> I think it worked well. Looking back, I feel like there were a lot of things that I didn't necessarily learn about that I may have learned about in other schools, but I think the experience was good for me because the class sizes and the fact that it felt like a little community and a little family, as opposed to this big school where most people wouldn't even know who you were. The school size worked for me, really worked (Julia Juarez).
>
> I think that was actually one of the things that CPESS did so well, was create an atmosphere—a very familiar atmosphere, very much that we're all part of this community and responsible for each other—that transcended any of those boundaries, for the most part. That doesn't mean people didn't fight each other. That doesn't mean I would necessarily go to your house to chill. But kind of in the general, you felt that these were people who were part of your community, regardless of what they looked like at the end of the day (Ramon Quesada).

Though the importance and meaning of citizenship and the extent of differentiation in citizenship rights within the United States is contested,

sociologists often begin with Thomas H. Marshall's conceptualization of the social position of citizenship. For Marshall, citizenship is constituted by three types of rights: civic rights, political rights, and social rights (1965). Of interest to many researchers are the ways in which people are excluded from participating as citizens in their societies. Incarcerated individuals, for example, can lose their ability to vote and therefore their political rights and 'citizenship' status are damaged (The Sentencing Project 2007; American Civil Liberties Union 2006).

More relevant to this study is that minorities have historically been denied access to several rights of citizenship. While slavery and incarceration have been the largest issues that restricted the largest number of African-Americans from their right to vote, immigrant status and restrictive voting practices have, even as recently as the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004, kept the voices and views of many minorities from being heard. Though all born or naturalized citizens of the United States over 18 legally have the right to vote, their ability to take advantage of this and other citizenship rights varies greatly.

Few former students spontaneously commented on their political beliefs or leanings during their interviews, although two students did name a political community when asked to name the communities of which they were a member. Survey respondents, however, indicated their level of civic involvement by their participation in particular activities. Ninety percent of former students surveyed had participated in at least one of the following activities:[40] boycotts, protests or

[40] The response categories are often, not often or never and actively, sometimes or never, depending on the question. These percentages are those who responded often or not often, and/or, actively or sometimes.

demonstrations, union volunteering, political party volunteering, contributing to political campaigns, or signing or creating a petition. Seventy percent had participated in at least two activities and 56 percent, three or more.

How former students utilize their political rights can be demonstrated in voting behavior. Most of those surveyed said that they voted in both the last (2004) presidential election (80.9%) and the 2005 local election (67.6%).[41] This participation can be compared to the national voting rates reported by the United States Census—58.3 percent of eligible voters voted in the presidential election and 42.3 percent in the local election (US Census 2004).[42] Former students rated values such as *influencing political structure* (66%), *influencing social values* (86.3%), and *becoming a community leader* (54%) as very important or somewhat important; and 86.5 percent said the same about *keeping up with current events*, all characteristics that would be required of a knowledgeable citizenry.

Social citizenship or social rights (also referred to as socioeconomic rights) are one of the clearest demonstrations of inequalities in citizenship status. These are the difference in the resources to which different groups in society have access. Several students (6%) cited economic difficulties as one of the reasons why they were unable to complete their college educations. Others (5%)

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[41] A few of those who said they did not vote were not citizens at the time and were therefore ineligible to vote.

[42] The Census did not have data for the 2003 election which the students who responded to my survey used for their local election response. The most recent local election for which rates are reported by the US Census is 2002. The Census rates used in this dissertation are overall rates for all groups. These numbers are the highest for any individual group except for those which measure the rates for whites only.

discussed problems in balancing school and work (and often family) as leading to a longer than average road to their first post-secondary degree. Antonia chose to leave her large, public university because:

> It got too expensive and difficult all around! (Antonia Huerta)

Another student:

> I joined the [armed forces]. Before then, I only attended college part time. I then had a child. Family and career obligations made attending school very difficult. (Aleshia Kelwood)

The school functioned within a system of unequal social citizenship structures so despite all the advantages of CPESS, low-income minority students still had to struggle with the societal inequalities they encountered in other institutions.

For the CPESS faculty, citizenship reached beyond the boundaries of the United States. One teacher explained:

> I remember Debbie was always talking about how we want you to leave the school being a powerful citizen of the world. (Jim Geneva, Math/Science)

During an interview, Deborah Meier described visiting a school in the Bronx where she found that most students had never been out of the borough, a situation that was not unique. Students all over the city have similar perspectives on the boundaries of their world.

> People don't leave the Bronx, they don't venture out. The beauty of being in East Harlem was, you could literally walk over to that garden over on Fifth Avenue, and you'd be transported to another world, that showed you something else other than black top and high rises. And that was really essential, being able to hop on the bus and go down to the Metropolitan [Museum of Art] (Ellen Donald, Humanities).

At CPESS, teachers encouraged their students to understand the vastness of the world and to discover their part in it—to understand how an event occurring half-way across the world could affect them. Bryan Ornell expressed this global perspective well:

> I would say the benefit of the school is that a graduate out of that school cannot say that they don't have a basic foundation of how to operate in the world on a theoretical level…A CPESS education prepares you for that. It prepares you for being around those different people and taking into account how they live their lives, how you want to live your life. It teaches you how to be a citizen of the world…I think CPESS was designed to make better citizens of the planet, which I've mentioned before, and I think a better citizen of this earth is someone who has the ability to see things from a different perspective other than their own. They are willing to expand their mind enough to see things that's beyond what they are accustomed to and they're willing to do that because a lot of people out here are not willing to do that. They do it their own way and that's it…a mission of, in my opinion, of CPESS, would be that we're trying to break out of that, that you are someone who is responsible about things and someone who is aware of things and aware of their connections and their significance to how you do things and that's the kind of person they want to come out of that school.

Several other students discussed the importance of a global perspective in their school years and in their later lives and how, without CPESS, they would have "looked at the world a little differently" (Claire Sebastin). This global perspective includes an *openness to others' ideas* which 74 percent of respondents said they learned at CPESS and *getting along with people who are different* (79.6%).

Meier asserted that the student's ability to see herself as part of a larger community than her immediate neighbors is important. Most students named New York as one of their communities but also included other communities.

> Definitely a New Yorker, I see myself as part of a lot of different communities, definitely part of the international community, whatever that means, the global community, which I think specifically is a very conscious community, the community I'm talking about… You put me in

> the category of Latino. I could be part of that. Just in terms of at least my own sentiments, I'm part of the black experience and what that means in the greater sense of it (Ramon Quesada).
>
> I am an African American, black, inner-city youth community. Impoverished communities, intelligent communities, southern communities, wealthy communities, any black communities. I am a part of the adventurous community, the collegiate community, the outdoors, the indoors, the ones that support kids, the one's in the community development. I've had enough experiences. I am part of the corporate environment. I'm part of the non-profit environment. I'm part of a lot of communities (Shayne Rayburn).
>
> Well, I consider myself a part of the New York community, definitely. I mean I love New York and I support New York wherever I go…I also consider myself to be part of the American community, I guess, although I'm not particularly happy with a lot of stuff that we're doing right now and also I think also this pan-African kind of community which is kind of like this people of color all over the world and I think its sort of an important community to recognize yourself as being a part of. While we all have very different experiences of being a person of color in our respective countries or in the United States but the idea that we all have this connectedness makes you think that—not that I feel like its gonna happen any time soon—but that we could all come together and do something, if we actually were able to do that (Joy Vernon).

Former students with this global perspective might also be primed to *lead* (70.8 percent of students surveyed said they learned leadership in CPESS) in a more democratic society that many alternative school members might envision. These students would have to be *adaptable* (52.1%), have *self-confidence* (60.4%) and be able to *help others* (69.4%)—skills and values of which the corresponding percentages of students said they learned in CPESS.

One student expressed this dramatically " [If I hadn't attended CPESS,] I think I would have been a cold-hearted bastard that saw the world in this one-dimensional, limited perspective as opposed to one who uses the 'Habits of Mind' to sort out things about the world around me" (Bryan Ornell). Clearly, the

students had an opportunity to leave their homes and see other parts of the city, state, and country—to develop an eye that can see beyond the East, Hudson, and Harlem Rivers.

I GOT THE SKILZ

> *Can somebody prepared in the 'Deborah Meier environment' mesh with the rest of the world?*
>
> A former board of education official critiquing CPESS in *The New York Times* (Chira 1992)

It is the issue of skills that generates the most controversy about alternative education. Those critical of alternative education, like the former Board of Education official quoted above, center their criticism on CPESS' effectiveness in the preparation of the students' for the next step. It is these variables thought to measure preparation that are most likely to be examined by educational research, in part because it is by these measures that schools across systems can be most easily compared and held accountable.

Eleven percent of students interviewed thought preparation for the next step was the mission of the school. The role of education in preparation for "the next step" has been debated for more than a century. Should education, as stated in The Cardinal Principles, educate people for the position they are expected to hold in the future? Or should students be educated for the sake of knowledge and not have their educations and occupations limited by their race, class, or gender? Can it be assumed that education provides all students with

equal access to opportunities –the same life chances,[43] to use Weber's phrasing? Or, should education be based on the understanding that students have differential levels of access and therefore differing opportunities to participate in particular occupations and institutions?

Most, if not all, CPESS teachers disagree with the contention of The Cardinal Principles that only select students should receive an academic education. At CPESS, teachers and staff have attempted to provide the students with the opportunity to do anything they choose, which includes a myriad of post-secondary options including school, work, and family. Teachers also emphasized the importance of preparing students for their next step:

> [The mission was] To help kids get into college. To expand them into seeing things that were beyond the scope of many high school students in East Harlem at the time. To teach kids to think, to use all of the tools that they had they may not have even been aware of. To get kids to be able to become as much as they wanted to be. To open up a new world to them. To be able to get them to use their minds, expand horizons, use Habits of Mind. (Rod Timothy, Other)

> Well, the goals were to have educated persons who would have a shot at tertiary education in the same way that students from very privileged backgrounds did, or do…. I think that that was our number one goal. I do know that there were some students who didn't go, and we knew that. However, our intention was to give them all the opportunity to try for it. And I think we succeeded at that goal, certainly for ten years. It was very, very good (Clarissa Edison, Humanities).

> Yes, every single student was expected to go to college—every single one. Even though we had the community service program, that was not really the expectation that they would go to work but that they would all go to some kind of post- secondary education that would bring them to whatever they wanted to do (Elias Boston, Math/Science).

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[43] "Life chances" is a Weberian term used to distinguish between class groups. He indicated that one's life chances are "the opportunities they will have or be denied throughout life (Kornblum 2003)."

> Well, I think certainly we made connections with colleges like Syracuse, Brown University, of course many of the New York City colleges as well—Bank Street, Hunter College—we wanted to see kids college-bound but I'm pretty sure that's what every high school—that's definitely one measure of success—how many kids get into college. We had the advisory visits to colleges, remember? But I think we also communicated to kids the fact that, "we know some of you are not going to go to college. Not necessarily because you can't, maybe some of you because you can't, but also because it's not in the cards for you and maybe its not what you want and that's okay. These habits of mind will still serve you," and I think we made that pretty clear. (Jim Geneva, Math/Science)

The teachers agreed that it was CPESS' expectation that all students attend college—part of the graduation requirements was to take the 'entrance' exams and apply to a number of CUNY and SUNY schools. The reality, however, was that not all students were able to attend an institution of higher learning. Despite the efforts of CPESS' faculty and staff, the differences in social citizenship were difficult to overcome. After leaving CPESS, students still had to confront the unequal socioeconomic structures of the larger society. Recognizing this, preparation for the next step included options beyond college.

Working Hard for the Money

According to teachers and former students, the scope of the curriculum at CPESS was similar to that at a liberal arts college. As Kenneth describes CPESS:

> They were giving us a liberal arts education, I think, with the hope anyway that we would go to, well, that we would be able to do whatever we wanted but that we would be prepared for a liberal arts education in college…(Kenneth Edwards).

A survey of 1,040 corporations and managers supports the importance of this type of education. The research found that almost half of the employers surveyed

preferred graduates from liberal arts colleges because of the quality of their communication skills as well as "the ability to understand people, [their] appreciation of ethical issues, and [their] leadership skills" (Galaskiewicz 1990). Given that one of the main concerns of employers about liberal arts graduates was their lack of practical and work skills, CPESS students should have been attractive because of the experience they had from internships and community service. Naomi surpassed her parents' education level and attained a graduate degree:

> Doing community service and having internships gives you résumé-building skills. It gives you work skills when you don't have a job and you're looking for that very first job. You have a skill to offer the person, besides the fact that you're a fresh-faced 14-year-old. Giving people standards to live up to, and giving them an idea of what's expected of them for the rest of their lives, because once you get out, school does not prepare you for living life every day. I don't care what anybody says, no schooling prepares you for living life every day. And having skills that require you to be responsible, like having the responsibility of going to a job and being there on time and getting a paycheck and paying your taxes. Those are the things that you need to have every day. And yes, you need to be able to think creatively, and you need to be able to make relationships from things that may seem abstract but you also need to have practical skills. And community service gives that to you. And you meet people that will eventually help you do stuff (Naomi Gordon).

Some students' portfolios were specifically directed towards preparing them for the world of work. The internship portfolio allowed for reflection on the work done over the course of the year and gave students an opportunity to think about work and its importance for them.

Half of the students interviewed mentioned their practical skills and knowledge portfolio when asked about the process to graduation:

> You had practical skills and knowledge portfolios where basically they gave you a list of possibilities where you came up with things that you

> might actually use in life so I remember one of the things that I did I think was finding an apartment or something and actually going through it—figuring out how you would get a loan and where you would look for an apartment, and another thing was doing your taxes, and so you had to go through them: explain a tax form and stuff (Joy Vernon).

> Like the practical skills ones, which I think were kind of corny to have to do, came out pretty mediocre. It was about getting my driver's license…Okay. I walked to the DMV. That stands for Department of Motor Vehicles. So I don't recommend that anybody do anything like that. I don't think it's a great system. I think it's, you know, terrible to have to do anything like that (Ramon Quesada).

CPESS also maintained connections to an outside vocational program (Co-Op Tech) in which students could choose to participate and learn skills such as the use of drafting tools for architecture. Theresa gained her Bachelors and Masters Degrees from large, public universities.

> And Senior Institute I really liked because I was able – I actually went to Co-op Tech and was learning computer-assisted drafting in the afternoons. And then I had different classes in the morning, and it was like every semester would change. (Theresa Needham)

> And granted most of the people that went to CPESS are pushed toward some type of further education. Which is a good thing, you need it nowadays. It's not like the people that didn't go to college didn't do something else. I know half the people from my class ended up going either through Co-op or they started going into other type of technical schools and other training programs for certificates and things. And everybody I know from CPESS is pretty much doing something with their lives. I mean, I don't really know anybody that's not doing anything (Myrna Glen).

Sixteen percent of students surveyed did not go on to college following CPESS—they went directly into the workforce[44] or the military. Their reasons for this choice ranged from family obligations to finances. Those who joined the workforce, however, reported that they appreciated the additional skills

[44] One student's "work" was illegal.

provided through community service, internships and practical skills, and knowledge portfolio.

All in the Family

Though better parenting was not an explicit goal of CPESS, a few students remarked that CPESS had an effect on the ways in which they communicated with others and that this extended to family relationships.

> Communication is something that I learned from CPESS, like I said, the teachers there, the entire relationship between student and teacher was, was so accommodating that it rarely made a student feel oppressed or being led rather than guided, you know what I mean? I have two step-children and because I'm not their real father, the only thing I can do to enforce my position as a role model and as an authoritative figure in the household, I pretty much use the same the same concepts that CPESS kind of teaches its students, you know, "you can call me by my first name. We're friends. You're welcome to tell me anything you want to tell me. You can talk to me about it without fear of reprisal or of judgment…" and the kids really love that because a lot of times they'd rather talk to me than talk to their mom or talk to their father (Vincente Ortega).

The practical skills and knowledge portfolio could also be used to demonstrate family and domestic proficiency, and several students used the portfolio as a role-playing exercise:

> Life skills or practical skills and knowledge. I –oh god, I'm blanking on her name—but, anyway, this girl and I got married and planned a budget and all that stuff which was awesome (Kenneth Edwards).

The flattened hierarchy of the school structure led to many students comparing the school to a family. As discussed earlier, the respectful nature of the relationships cultivated at CPESS, specifically in advisories, might be more easily transferred to family than those from other, more hierarchical and less communal educational experiences. Florence did not graduate from the large schools she attended:

> I liked that you can go in and say, tell people how you felt. And then it's a place to express yourself, not as far as like if you want to crack jokes. It just was like – not a homeroom, but like a family. Because there were only, like, I swear, like six of us, or 10 of us – it was so small (Florence Newton, student).

> I thought it was pretty cool. We were all family in our advisory…I felt that they pushed each other for the most part…They definitely looked out for each other, big time. And I'm not talking physically, in fighting, I'm talking about "you better get that done because [the teacher's] seriously gonna get in your face" or whatever it was, because they knew what my expectations were of them and if somebody was slacking off, they were able to check each other and I found that very admirable of them to do as the year went through (Elias Boston, Math/Science teacher).

The College Way

> I've always said that if CPESS had its own college, I would have had the perfect educational experience. I felt that CPESS prepared me for life…not necessarily for college (Joy Vernon).

Most of the students' complaints about their CPESS experience can be placed in this category. While most teachers would point out that almost the entire population of CPESS applied to college (95.8 percent of survey participants), nearly all were accepted and more than 80 percent (89 percent on survey) began college. Sustainability proved to be more of a challenge than may have been expected. One of the most significant problems, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is that after spending between 2 and 14 years in an alternative educational program, students had to return to (or enter for the first time), a traditional educational institution that their previous education had taught them to resist. Many former students and teachers from the first five graduating classes referred to a culture shock in the process of moving from the sheltered, nurturing CPESS environment into college.

> There was such a difference between CPESS and the American mainstream that I think it might have been kind of a culture shock for students. I know it was a culture shock for students, as they went into other environments that were not so much like CPESS. For example, kids who went to Cornell—as opposed to kids who maybe went to Sarah Lawrence, or Bard—got a major culture shock. (Chiara Salvator, Math/Science teacher)

> I feel like one of the weaknesses of CPESS was that the curriculum was so dissimilar than what you would expect at a standard high school that it put their students at a disadvantage when they finally did move on to college, which of course was the goal of the school. (Frank Huerta, student)

Almost all students reported difficulties in two general areas of college: math and science, and study skills. Students explained that while they often found math to be interesting in CPESS classes, most felt that they didn't receive the fundamentals of math and therefore were forced into remedial or supplementary math classes.

> Math/science was another fun class. Even though I hated math, the approach that he took was…Dave was such a friendly character that you couldn't help but give it some effort, even though I didn't want to do it…(Vincente Ortega)

> Some things in math and science that were considered basic or it was thought that they should be basic knowledge in college, I had little to no knowledge of (Frank Huerta).

> I think it was a wonderful place, and a wonderful world for us to be in at CPESS. It allowed us to be free and create knowledge. But we had to go out in the real world. We had to compete with students from traditional high schools. We had to compete with these other schools. And it was great that we were able to explain our process and all that. But when I was at school, I didn't know – it was difficult. That first year was kind of difficult because I wasn't used to taking tests. I think that's why so many of us had a hard time with the SATs. I know in my class it wasn't that we weren't smart enough, but we didn't learn it. You know, everyone took the Kaplan. They came to CPESS and gave us the Kaplan because they knew that we weren't ready. With other schools, they prepared you for it. And so I think that although it was great that I learned – I learned how to play poker, I learned how to Yahtzee. It didn't help me with the SATs.

> And so a lot of us – I don't know what they're doing now, but a lot of us from that first class took remedial math when we got to college. Took some remedial basic sciences when we went to college…you know we had to take a lot of remedial stuff to sort of get us up to par. Because we hadn't learned the regular way of doing things. Again, everything was so creative. I'm so glad I know how to play poker, but when it came to me taking statistics in college, I was behind. (Olivia Wright).

This could be attributed to the 'less is more' philosophy which may have produced students who were very proficient in some areas and were not at all familiar with others. As described in the Coalition of Essential Schools common principles:

> The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by "subjects" as conventionally defined (essentialschools.org).

Colleges tended to expect the more general "subject" knowledge from their students rather than the "intellectual and imaginative competences" and the alternative curriculum that CPESS tried to offer. For example, if one were to examine the topics covered in the lowest level math class at CUNY's Hunter College—symbolic logic, sets, number systems, relations and operations and topics in probability and statistics—it is likely that CPESS students would have come in with knowledge of only one or two of these topics and therefore would have to take this course (Mathematics and Statistics Department 2006). A more advanced class with topics such as introduction to matrices and vectors, systems of linear equations, and linear programming with applications, however, might be a course with which a CPESS student would be more familiar. In order to enter

that course, though, a student would have to have taken and passed a much lower level course.

> Because it was so different—they were so anti-what- traditional-schools-did, when I went to college, it was difficult, because the assumption was that everyone came from that educational background. And I struggled. Because that was supposed to be common knowledge, so it was hard. I could tell you stuff about Mayan Indians and Incan Indians, but I couldn't tell you anything else about American history (Antonia Huerta).

Also, unless supplemental (or college) courses were available, CPESS course offerings in math only extended to trigonometry and analytic geometry. There were no calculus classes or other courses that some students felt could have been an advantage in their college careers.

> I remember at one point [some other students and I] were actually very dissatisfied about the education, in terms of mathematics, or certain subjects, felt that it was deficient, that it needed more. 'Cause by the time you should be coming out of high school, you should have at least a little small taste of calculus. We barely, we don't even come near it. What is it? Algebra and trigonometry is the closest you come to it. Or analytical geometry? Yea, no, that's not good enough (Bryan Ornell).

The teachers, as they stressed in previous quotes, believed that mathematical and historical reasoning, not the particular subject of study, would serve the students well in math courses after CPESS. One student also explained that she had trouble with more abstract mathematical operations, as she had always used mathematics in a directly applicable way. A major focus of CPESS' mathematics program was on larger projects and using mathematics to solve real-life problems.

> When I went to college, my plan was to major in mathematics and creative writing and neither of those things happened. The math thing didn't happen because one, I couldn't really deal with abstract math, for whatever reason. I needed something that was a little more concrete and I think its probably—I'm not gonna blame CPESS for that—but the fact

> that I had all those assignments where I made these very concrete things like I was this woman who was talking about this dam flowing over and I was doing the creating amusement park rides so to me math was very concrete, and then I get to [college] and all of a sudden they want me to start thinking about differentials and stuff, and you know using infinity as a number and it just got to the point where I just couldn't deal with it (Joy Vernon).

CPESS students, however, did make educational choices that included the sciences. Three survey respondents majored in the sciences (including physics, neuroscience and chemistry) and four others studied economics and computers. All seven of them currently have math or science occupations. Two of these students had the advantage of supplemental educational programs or tutoring, but the others mastered these skills without that access.

It seems that for the majority of the former students of CPESS, math was difficult. Students spoke highly of their general analytic skills, but few were positive about their attempts to extend their use of the mathematical skills taught at CPESS to other educational experiences.

Fewer students were negative about science education. Students who discussed it tended to place it with math in their criticism. Only two students spoke specifically about their issues with the science program on their survey. Both of these students went on to pursue science careers; they were the most affected by problems in the school's science education, as well as capable of overcoming them.

Finally, students commented on their deficiencies in study skills. They had trouble taking notes or tests because this was not required in CPESS classes. In discussion-based classes, jotting down a few words here and there was often

sufficient. Lecture-based classes, which tend to predominate at lower level college courses especially at the larger schools, required more detailed notes—a skill that was often cultivated and developed in other high schools. Students reported that their discomfort with the lecture format also made them uncomfortable asking questions to clarify their notes or going to see the professor after class.

Few students mentioned problems with essay or short-answer tests in their classrooms—73.5 and 57.1 percent respectively said they learned these skills at CPESS—but complaints about standardized tests were second only to complaints about mathematics. The number of students who said that CPESS should have given more standardized tests was surprising. Most students advocated for both tests and portfolios—if for no other reason than to ensure that students were prepared for the tests they would someday have to take to move on to further steps (SAT, GRE, GMAT).

> Looking back, because these are the tests that end up getting people into school and if you want your CPESS students to stand out or if you want your students to stand out. I should say it probably added pressure on them but they probably need to take those tests on top of the extra work that they were doing, in order to truly stand out because that will let schools know that not only can you handle the level of work that you're accustomed for them to have, you're also doing those extra stuff that your school is making you do so you must be some extra special student (Bryan Ornell).

> You know, if the assertion I'm making is correct, right, that the bulk of these kids, assuming they go to colleges, are going to traditional colleges. Standardized testing is just going to be the norm for the majority of these kids, right? So what I mean is, look at any given year, how many kids went to Wesleyan or Oberlin or Antioch versus how many kids went to Syracuse versus Utica College versus [other traditional schools]. Those colleges use traditional structures. They are going to be testing your ass (Ramon Quesada).

Among survey respondents who remembered their SAT scores, the average was a 1041 combined score with a range from 750 to 1440. According to The College Board, the average national SAT score in 1996 was 500 for verbal and 503 for mathematics for a total score of 1003 (www.collegboard.com 2007). This placed CPESS students slightly above average for all schools.[45] Only five of the eighteen students who remembered the section breakdown of their scores, however, scored higher on the math section than the verbal.

Beyond test scores, students who went to small, liberal arts colleges seemed to fare better overall than those who went to other types of schools. Many of those who were able to attend small colleges had selected them for their CPESS-like qualities. Students commented on their size, their openness, and their seminar classes – all which resembled the learning environment to which they were accustomed.

> [My] College was a fantastic place. Small, caring, very serious intellectually, with lots of opportunities for students (Kenneth Edwards).

> I went to [a small school] so the class sizes were small similar to CPESS. We had discussions. There were some classes that were more structured and less alternative but in essence [It] was very much like attending an alternative high school. (Kimberly Hawthorne)

Some students who began their post-secondary educations in large schools found they felt more at home, learned more and were more likely to graduate from the small school they transferred to than those students who remained in larger public universities.

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[45] Because students in the five graduating classes took their exams in different years, the averages varied somewhat.

> [At CUNY] there were some classes that were more hands-on than the others. There were quite a few classes where we were just basically taking notes the whole time. The teacher didn't speak to us as much as it was just taking notes the whole time and they would tell us what we needed to do or what had to be done [After leaving CUNY] I went to [a smaller school] for a while. And that seemed more like the CPESS experience. The classes were a lot smaller and there was more interaction between us and the teachers there, and I did really well there (Julia Juarez).

Other students succeeded in larger schools. Most of those large schools were within driving distance of the city and several students said that proximity to New York City was one of the things that they liked about their college experience. These students also found themselves in schools that, while usually majority white, had enough diversity to allow the student to be comfortable. Students who attended larger schools complained about the size of the school and the classes but most reported that they were able to find enclaves in their schools to make them feel smaller. Syracuse University, for example, was a school that many CPESS students attended (12.8 percent of those surveyed who attended college in this survey); and sixty percent of those who attended, graduated from the school. According to teachers and students, it was the support system available at Syracuse that helped many students through the transition. This included both the in-school supports and the relationship CPESS had with the school, which led to a small community of CPESS students attending the school at any particular time. For those who reported that the school did not work well for them, the large size and the weather seemed to be their biggest difficulties.

> Syracuse was a very supportive school. I was a part of the Student Support Services Program and they assisted me with tutors, choosing classes, counseling on a major, financial aid. They were always there when I needed them. Syracuse was a diverse school and was

> predominately white. However I did not feel out of place with the amount of Black, Latino, Asian and Native American population. Syracuse graduated a lot of their students and I had a good relationship with professors that taught smaller classes (Theresa Needham).

Forty-nine percent of former student respondents did not finish at their first school. Sixty-nine percent of them began their post-secondary education in large schools. In all, 56.5 percent attended large schools.

There was a mixed response to the advice given to the students about their college choices. Some students reported that their advisors did their best not to unduly influence their advisees in any way. This led to some students feeling that their institutions were poorly chosen

> You know, I got into Oberlin. Going to Oberlin versus [a less prestigious school], which no one knows, right? I think adults should have said that specifically. Your résumé will have more cache, if you went to this school. It may not matter to you. At the end of the day, you may not want to be in Ohio, blah, blah, blah, but there is a serious tier system in the colleges (Ramon Quesada).

Other students commented on the value of the college advice and the usefulness of the advisory trips in allowing them to think about and visit colleges. A major latent function (or dysfunction) of this alternative model is that it created students who adapted better to small liberal art colleges. Most of the students, however, were not able to attend these schools, primarily due to a lack of funding or the inability to procure scholarships.

It was also the case that in the current context of diminishing social services, balancing school, home, and work became very difficult for some. Most students ended up in large public universities because they were less expensive and more convenient for students who had other obligations, allowing them to

save money and assist their families by living at home. Forty-eight percent of surveyed students who went to college obtained their bachelors degree in four years and 83.9 percent in six years or less. Twenty-one percent obtained a Masters degree and 7.2 percent continued their educations beyond that level.

The CPESS Toolbox

Strengths	Weaknesses
Critical Thinking	Transition to Traditional Higher Education
Service Work	Math
Citizenship	Science
Civic Involvement	Study Skills
Global Perspective	Standardized Tests
Life Skills	
Analytical Thinking	
Historical Reasoning	

Table 2

ESCAPE

A subtext of this discussion of the goals of the alternative school is the effect of this model on black and Latino students. The students at CPESS are very similar to the larger New York public school population—which was 37 percent black, 34 percent Latino and 52 percent eligible for free or reduced-fee lunch in 1997—and, therefore, the outcomes of a CPESS education has implications for the schooling of these marginalized groups. Twenty-five percent of interviewed students felt that the mission of the school was to provide a quality, alternative education for an underserved population.

> I think to address some of the serious problems with our public school system, especially in regards to how it services students of color (Frank Huerta).

Isabel works in marketing:

> I would say it's to give kids in this lower-middle-income neighborhood the opportunity to really expand their minds and to think critically and to become life-long learners. That's what I think Debbie wanted (Isabel Henriquez).
>
> I guess breaking the cycle. I don't know if this is their official mission, but in my opinion, I really think that their mission, what they were trying to do, was to offer a quality education to students who probably would not be able to otherwise get it. I think that they were really trying to create a private school atmosphere on public school funds. To create an atmosphere that you wouldn't get in a traditional high school, to really better the students. I really think that they wanted our lives to be better. And I really think they were trying to do that through education (Olivia Wright).
>
> To create a successful school atmosphere wherein people, children, were engaged, would stay in school through graduation, graduate, so to lower drop-out rates. And to really make students critically think about their own education. And through being sort of flexible, tailor itself somewhat to each student individually rather than sort of applying a blanket curriculum to everyone (Linus Ford).

The analysis of dropout rates is one of the most frequently used measures to assess minority groups' success in education, though the use of some measurements of dropout rates have been found to be problematic, at best.[46] Nevertheless, the high school graduation rates of black and Latino students are

[46] Dropout rates are measured in a variety of ways, and, in reporting the rates, it is not always made clear which methodologies are used. Dropout rates can be measured through self-reported survey responses, the percentage of seventeen-year-olds with high school diplomas as well as data reported by the school about who drops out. Even school-reported data, however, can be unclear because schools define who is a dropout differently. Some schools will claim that if students attain a GED, they are not to be counted as dropouts. Other schools attempt to track what happens to students once they leave the school. This can be a costly and difficult process and is therefore not often implemented (Greene and Forster 2003; Kaufman and Chapman 2002). Dropout rates are also frequently measured by counting those students who begin high school and do not finish. This measure misses students who leave before the ninth grade, a relatively common occurrence if schools have required standardized tests in eighth grade (Kozol 1991; Kaufman and Chapman 2002).

clearly significantly lower than their white counterparts. The national graduation rate at the high school level has been reported as various points between 50 and 75 percent—depending on the source and the particular measure—with the rate of whites between 10 and 30 percent higher than their black counterparts (Hale 2001; Mishel and Roy 2006).

Most research on the New York City school system has found that graduation rates for black students were closer to the national estimates of 50 percent rather than 75 percent for white students. Black students not only have a 50/50 chance of graduating high school but they have also been found to be unprepared when entering the workforce. The Manhattan Institute defines "preparation for the workforce" as graduation from high school, participation in courses that are required in college, and demonstration of basic literacy skills (Green and Forster 2003). These conditions extend to the low level of college completion nationally which is at a "dismally low 42 percent" (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education 2006).

Given this, the successes of Central Park East Secondary School are remarkable. Nearly all CPESS students from the early years of the school graduated and went on to begin college. While they did not all finish college, their rate of success far surpasses that of black and Latino students nationally. Based on data collected in *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* "black students who earn a four-year college degree have incomes that are substantially higher than blacks who have only some college experience but have not earned a degree…and blacks who complete a four-year college education have a median

income that is now near parity with similarly educated whites (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education 2006).” Disparities in socio-economic structures are difficult to overcome and some educational researchers have argued against the effectiveness of schooling in making these larger societal changes. It is important, however, to attend to the effectiveness of any model that attempts to combat these socioeconomic issues and can assist in addressing some of the income disparities present in society for these students.

Similar to Merton’s “rebellion”, the practices of the educators at CPESS were intended to lead

> [men and wo]men outside the environing social structure to envisage and seek to bring into being a new, that is to say, a greatly modified social structure. It presupposes alienation from reigning goals and standards (Merton 1957:211).

While wide-spread transformations are not easy, the school sought to create graduates who would have the abilities to work within the structure and, at the same time, to change it.

To return to the question of the effectiveness of the alternative school in reaching its goals, the evidence points towards a moderate level of effectiveness. Many former students do reflect the characteristics of public intellectuals and democratic citizens. If there are failings in the school’s ability to attain its goals, however, they appear to be largely a result of the friction between the innovation of these schools and the traditionalism still dominant in higher education, as well as the struggles the students faced in confronting the inequalities of society. Those students who were able to break away from the more traditional type of schools in their later schooling seem to have been the most successful, but

others were also able to use their alternative educations to adapt to those more traditional institutions. The effectiveness of the CPESS model in achieving its goals as a school, does not necessarily address all of its functions. The school also serves as an organization and an organizational framework sheds some light on the processes the school went through during its decline and the emergence of other alternative schools. The following chapter will look at the organizational functions of integration and adaptation and the ways in which they challenged the longevity of the school.

Chapter 6

Falling Down

The Decline of CPESS as an Institution

As alternative schools, such as CPESS, struggle to transform the educational system, they must also resist the impact of external counter pressures on their alternative aspects. Schools can be severely affected by changes in population, fiscal conditions, and governmental and educational policies. Anyon's description of the ways in which schools are embedded in wider local and national structures (see Chapter 1) suggested some of the constraints that teachers and administrators at CPESS faced as they attempted to maintain the school as an alternative educational institution.

In the next two chapters, I will discuss CPESS as an organization, analyzing it through the lens of organizational sociology. This chapter will explore how, for some faculty members, external policies and changes in the external environment transformed the school from being considered a model of alternative education to becoming:

> a part of the mainstream of education…we couldn't just move into being a regularized school. We needed to have the alternative focus, and that was now missing. So it's like fitting a square peg in a round hole…I think that was the beginning of the demise. An imposition – it's like we swept Dewey and everybody out of the way. Dewey and Freire and all of those, and go back to Emerson, or to another way of looking at children: Children must sit in their seats, teachers sit at the desk, and they learn (Clarissa Edison, Humanities teacher).

This narrative is one of the most interesting aspects of CPESS' organizational cycle: the institution was created, became world-renowned—seemingly diffusing its theories, methods, structure and pedagogy across the

New York City school system and other systems across the nation—but then lost its center in the process. This super-nova effect is not unknown in sociological theory, but it is an unusual and under-researched approach to the analysis of a school.

In order to understand this decline as more than the failure of an innovative institution, it is useful to turn to an approach developed by Nicholas Mullins (1973) to analyze the creation and diffusion of sociological theories. Mullins uses four stages to follow the development and mainstreaming of new sociological theories. The process begins with the *normal* stage when a variety of individuals at different institutions are in the beginning stages of forming a new theory. These individuals begin to gather during the *network* phase and then form a *cluster* around the various leaders of the new theory. Finally, if the theory is accepted,[47] it becomes a *specialty* and those who initiated it are hired away from its stronghold to bring knowledge of this new discipline to other institutions.

When CPESS began, it was the work of a few enterprising individuals who met to create a new alternative to the traditional, urban high school. These innovators *clustered* around elementary school principal, Deborah Meier, and created a new educational model. The school was centered around its small, family-like classes; it had a distinct philosophy designed to empower students, teachers, and parents and a structure focused on cooperation and an attempt to level the hierarchical relationships generally found in traditional high schools. These three components together formed the foundation of an alternative

[47] If the theory is rejected by its parent discipline, it is labeled revolutionary which makes attaining the next level difficult.

perspective on public education which over time has been revised and reinstated.

Applying Mullins' (1973) formulation to this school, CPESS can be seen as a revolutionary cluster, as administrators created its structure to combat the social reproduction inherent in the United States educational system. To add further support to its revolutionary status, the school structure never gained complete legitimacy within the New York school system.[48] CPESS rejected some of the patterns of the larger society, and teachers and administrators at the school strove to create and maintain new structures that emphasized democracy, community, and cooperation.

This revolutionary faction (or in Merton's terms—rebellious group) of the educational system attempted to attain specific goals that were distinct from those of the mainstream. Students from CPESS went on to attend and graduate from college at a higher rate than their counterparts at other schools in the city.[49] Many of these students have also been involved in a variety of political and community-based activities. They considered themselves a part of many national and international communities.

This and the subsequent chapter will examine CPESS as a *specialty*, Mullins' stage four. I argue that over the last ten years, it is perhaps the success of the CPESS "spirit"—the pedagogy, structure and philosophy—that has led to

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[48] This is one of the reasons for its downfall and will be discussed below.

[49] According to the Annual School Report (1996), 94 percent of the graduates in the CPESS' class of 1996 intended to go to college as compared to 82.9 percent in the other city schools. Eighty-nine percent of respondents in this study attended college. The six-year college graduation rate for black students in 2004 was 39.1 percent (Horn and Carroll. 2006), in this survey, 83.9 percent graduated in six years.

the dissolution of the original CPESS institution. The hiring of CPESS teachers and administrators away from CPESS mimics the specialty phase, which Mullins describes as one in which those who began the new sociological theory and their students become the leaders in the field and are diffused among various institutions to teach the cluster to others.

> The transition from cluster to specialty stage begins as the students become successful themselves, and both they and others are hired away from their original locations. No location has yet been able to support the cluster indefinitely; it is expensive to retain successful people…Ironically, then, the successful cluster pays for its success by ceasing to exist. During the breakup period, the old ties of personal contact are weakened by increased distance and responsibility (resulting from job promotions received by successful group members). When the original bonds fail to connect the group closely any more, the ultimately successful cluster's next effort is to institutionalize the work that has been done. (Mullins 1973:24)

In this case, through the pipeline of those students who became teachers (or worked with children)—as well as the teachers who left the school to become teachers, founders, administrators or consultants at other schools—the alternative educational philosophy of the school was exported. It became part of the reasoning behind New York's Mayor Bloomberg's recent small schools initiative (2004) and that of countless schools both before and after the small school emphasis in the Department of Education's reform policies.

As teachers from CPESS moved, like missionaries, to start their own schools and bring the word of "alternativism" to other institutions, CPESS found it difficult to maintain its structure. During this process, the school—a 7^{th}-12^{th} grade institution at the time the respondents attended—lost its lower grades to various

incarnations of middle schools.[50] Only one teacher at the high school level remains from CPESS' first five years, and there are rumors of the school's closing. CPESS has found itself on several lists of Schools Under Registration Review (SURR)[51] (although never officially named one), indicating that learning is at such a low level that the school may have to be directly supervised by the state.

This and the following chapter will apply a variety of theories of institutional change to CPESS to examine changes in the school and their effects on other educational institutions in the City. This chapter will explore the course of CPESS' decline, factors that have contributed to changes in the school, and the school's ability to survive as an alternative institution.

THE SUCCESS OF SUCCESSION

In 1994, after the graduation of the first four classes, Deborah Meier began to consider the system-wide implications of CPESS and similar schools. She recounts thinking that these schools needed a larger institution to assist with assessment, accountability and networking. The pieces were in place at various administrative levels for her to leave CPESS to create this system, so Meier left the school to concentrate on these pursuits (Meier Interview 2006).[52] Her exit

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[50] Including Central Park East Prep, which was eventually phased into Central Park East Middle School (also called JHS 13), where it remains today.

[51] A school is placed on the list by the Department of Education after failing to meet testing standards and is then reviewed by the Department. If the school fails a review, it is closely monitored by the state (New York State Department of Education 2000). If the school fails to meet particular goals, it is closed.

[52] Because of administrative changes in the Board of Education, Meier was unable to create the larger institution which she had planned. She considered returning to CPESS,

initiated other changes in CPESS. Many of the original teachers had been attracted to the project because of Meier's charismatic leadership,[53] and once she was no longer present, the mission was perhaps weaker in later teachers than it had been in the early faculty core.[54] Meier also had personal access to resources as a result of her awards and accolades which became more difficult to access as she became more distant from the school. Small organizations, especially, are more easily influenced by a change in leadership (Hall 1977), and, with each new change, the initial message may also change slightly. Teachers added:

> I saw people, more than anything else, come and go and I think that whenever you have an organization that is there because of a leader that has very strong beliefs, like Deborah did, and you change the leadership, there's something lost in the translation, even though you're not really translating. But between her doing it to Paul doing it, there's differences in the way the message is delivered. So when the new staff came in, they didn't hear that strong conviction that Debbie had about learning (Elias Boston, Math/Science Teacher).

> [I came to the school because] I knew Debbie had visions about what was going on, and she would get great support. And so it seemed like a wonderful opportunity. Her reputation, and the school's reputation, plus the teachers I knew there were so committed and so wonderful that it was very different than any other teaching experience I had had (Rod Timothy, Non-Subject Teacher).

In discussing the creation of assessment instruments for his class, Elias Boston explains the importance of leadership:

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but concluded that the school was in good hands and that it would be inappropriate to return at that point (Meier 2006 Interview).

[53] Charismatic leadership will be discussed further in the next chapter

[54] This view was not unanimous. There was one teacher of those interviewed who believed the less structured leadership that followed Meier's departure from CPESS benefited the school.

> And the way we would do it is that in the team meeting, we would come up with something and revise it probably the following team meeting and then Debbie would look at it, give her thoughts, or either Debbie or Herb so you know it was a learning community of professionals in the school and that's to Debbie's credit. It wasn't just verbiage it was actual practice (Elias Boston, Math/Science).

Organizational sociological research on succession tends to focus on managers who leave or are forced out of organizations because of problems, failures or other concerns (Gouldner 1984; Haveman and Khaire 2004; Haveman, Russo and Meyer 2001; Haveman, 1993). The early succession of leadership at CPESS (four directors/principals over the last 13 years), however, had less to do with the failures of the school (by most accounts, the institution was running effectively) and more to do with its successes. As a consequence of advertised successes, school leaders left or were recruited to other educational opportunities.

The first leadership change was especially significant as the school lost not only the "manager" but the founder as well. This specific instance of managerial succession can be approached from a slightly differently perspective than that of general managerial succession. According to Heather Haveman and Mukti V. Khaire (2004), two variables which strongly influence the effects of founder succession on organizational failure are the strength of the founder's ideology and whether the founder has singular or multiple roles within the organization.

The term ideology has been defined in various ways throughout history and social theory. In Marxism, ideology generally refers to the ideas and values of the dominant class (Marx and Engels 1978). Mannheim allows for a broader use of this concept, labeling it the "ideas and values" perspective rather than

ideology: “By this term we mean the subject’s whole mode of conceiving things as determined by his historical and social setting” (Mannheim 1936: 266). According to interviews with her faculty, Meier maintained a strong perspective about educational and social issues throughout her ten years at CPESS.

While I do not have data that would give me a sense of the ideological perspective of Meier’s direct successor, Paul Schwartz, based on teacher and student interviews, it seems likely that the strength of the ideological leadership in the school weakened with each successor. One teacher commented that the current principal “understands that Debbie’s philosophy would be awesome, if [he] could bring it back to that (Elias Boston),” but this has yet to happen.

> “When founders are ideologically zealous, finding similarly zealous successors may be very difficult. In such circumstances, founders’ departures are very likely to lead to loss of organizational vision, poor performance, and ultimately to failure.” (Haveman and Khaire 2004: 441)

As the founder/director, Meier did not have the same type of multiple roles as Haveman’s research subjects (Haveman studied editors and publishers in the magazine industry). Meier, however, exerted some level of influence in most arenas of the school. Teachers explained that, as a staff, they discussed and examined some of the more mundane aspects of the school with Meier.

> Debbie Meier would come occasionally to a math meeting, ask us all really, really good, but frustrating, questions that really got us thinking and that deepened our level of conversation, always. We were glad when she got up and left, but when she left, the conversation was a little bit more focused around things like the Habits of Mind and what kids were actually learning, as opposed to some of the tangents that Debbie might have gotten us off on (Jim Geneva, Math/Science).

The teachers’ views about what happened to the leadership at CPESS are mixed. Some said that CPESS changed a little at each successive leadership.

The culmination of these effects, however, may not have become evident until David Smith's (Meier's third successor) tenure, as a variety of other environmental and structural factors (to be discussed below) also emerged.

> I was there for Debbie, Paul and David. You know, the strengths of leadership diminished. And the firmness of adhering to certain principles like "we are not going to try to teach according to the Regent syllabus" – that changed as the person at the helm changed, to the point where I think that under Dave's leadership we didn't have variances any more, and we were teaching Regents curriculum…that didn't quite happen while I was there. But I could see that there was maybe a deviation from some of the original zeal and idealism, dedication. And also it was a function of the different teachers who were there (Chiara Salvator, Math/Science).

Other teachers speak about the importance of having a good mix of talents, strengths, and weaknesses between co-directors and the importance of maintaining that balance throughout the tenure of the school.

> I respect and admire David. I think that when you select two people to be co-directors—one being white [Paul] and one being black [David]—you have to be very clear what the job descriptions are and I don't think that that was ever there. So, I think that their strengths were not listed so that they could work to their strengths and the same thing with their weaknesses to identify if they had common weaknesses that nobody was gonna ignore that because usually, people don't get out of their comfort zone so, if their weaknesses are similar, both of those leaders, then that area is gonna be something that is gonna be ignored so I think that that was part of what happened (Elias Boston, Math/Science).

The succession research also addresses the potential effects of managerial promotion from within as compared to that which comes from outside the organization (Hall 1977). CPESS had both forms and experienced the strengths and weaknesses of each. Those promoted from inside the CPESS system had been previously socialized to CPESS and were therefore "CPESS family members." Their difficulties in taking over the postiion, however, could stem from

a lack of experience in administration as well as the role conflict[55] between staff needs and the administration's ability to meet those needs once an individual switched from being a staff member to directing that same staff.

The school's leadership, after the first three directors, followed more closely the succession model described in the research cited above. As the school became more troubled, new directors were appointed to fix the problem. Later directors attempted to legitimize the Central Park East High School institution by conforming to the norms of other high schools—adapting other schools' pedagogy and structure—and therefore, the school came to resemble its more traditional counterparts, a process Paul DiMaggio (1983) refers to as normative isomorphism.

As important as administrative leadership was, so was the leadership exercised by CPESS teachers. According to teacher interviews, it was not just the presence of good teachers that allowed CPESS to function but also the balance of skills that different teachers brought to the CPESS community. When asked about teacher recruitment, Meier explained that:

> They were all experienced teachers. That's one big difference between that and the new schools now is we didn't have a single inexperienced teacher with us. I mean, when I say "experienced" – most of the teachers [who] came on board CPESS had been teaching for more than 10 or 15 years. So I thought that was a strength, because they had already explored the question of how do you run a class? and what do you do about pencils? They knew the routines of it. They also knew what kids were like in regular programs, so they weren't comparing us to some fantasy they had.

[55] Role conflict occurs when roles within an individual's different statuses conflict with each other (Parsons 1951).

Yet the students and teachers recall that there were several young teachers. At another point in her interview, Meier explained that young teachers joined the staff in two ways: through student teaching experience in the CPE high or elementary school or through networking with others who were involved in education. Meier remarked about one young teacher: “his mother was an old friend…and she was an old friend through education. So…he was probably someone who was fascinated by what we were doing. And he also had gone to New York City public schools.” According to teacher interviews, the socialization to the CPESS community was extremely important for new teachers while the experience brought to the school by veterans was also invaluable. Ellen Donald explained her own path to CPESS:

> There’s a balance in that. Really what we need are student teachers learning in the school … that’s what I did. I student-taught at Central Park East. But I also came from a progressive education background. So I think that you really needed to live the culture to be able to become a part of the culture (Ellen Donald, Humanities).

Previous experience was not necessarily in teaching for all teachers. Teachers had experience in other political and educational arenas:

> Richard, who actually didn’t come from education, had 20 years’ experience in organizing, in unions. So he understood what it meant to organize people. And Nancy – I don’t know if you know this or not – came from civil rights union organizing background, also. Jose was also an organizer. And so you’d have all these pockets of very strong political organizational background. And then instilled into that, you’d have these people who were more like teacher-type people (Ellen Donald, Humanities).

As one teacher explained, the teachers represented a variety of talents including a balance of organizational personalities, leaders and innovative thinkers. These

various skills came together at CPESS to create a cohesive unit which was able to accomplish the necessary tasks to keep the school functioning.

> I think the hardest thing for every progressive school right now is finding people who have enough experience and enough – what [we] call organizational background – to be able to help run an institution as well as just teach. Because part of the thing about Central Park East was that it was a "staff-run" school. However, if you had the mindset like I'm just going to take care of my classroom, no matter how well you did that, if you didn't have the mindset that this whole building—the whole school—was your community [then]…you weren't contributing to the larger picture of what was the best thing for kids and what the best thing for the school…Even if you went to – even if you did your student teaching [at the school], it didn't necessarily mean that you could translate – that's like classroom management. Classroom management is not the same as organizational management. And that was a big, major part of it. Like understanding what democracy meant (Ellen Donald, Humanities).

The expansion of the alternative school model led to many new schools which followed the philosophy of CPESS. Teachers had the opportunity to move to other schools and share the CPESS gospel with new generations of students at locations around the city, state and country. The population of veteran teachers at the school declined as they retired or found new positions in other educational situations.

At this level, CPESS was subject to significant changes. When the school began, there was a balance of experienced and new teachers—some were specifically recruited for the job, others heard about the school, came to visit and envisioned their place in the school almost immediately. Each teacher participated in the school's weekly team meetings and larger staff meetings and through this participated in the process of creating the school. The newer teachers looked up to the veteran teachers and, in turn, those teachers found

value in their interactions with their less experienced counterparts as information and teaching experiences were shared through their team meetings.

> What I think that I loved the most was the opportunity to learn from people who were in the forefront of progressive education doing something different from what I grew up with and I really enjoyed that. I was fortunate enough. My first student teaching was with a teacher in the elementary school…who had thirty years of experience when I met her…then in the secondary school, where I got to meet many of those folks, I got to see how different things were (Elias Boston, Math/Science).

Problems of succession, however, were also evident among the teachers. Some of the teachers, who were also important as leaders in CPESS, began to branch out and use their leadership qualities to establish and develop other schools. This left CPESS with a smaller group of leaders than in the initial sages.

> But we had so many talented people there that we didn't – we weren't that worried about what [skills] we would have or what we wouldn't have. Now that's not how it ended up. Because so many talented people went off to start their own schools. I think David ended up getting left with more passive types. Ironically…they weren't interested in leading. They weren't interested in organizing (Ellen Donald, Humanities).

Not only did CPESS suffer from founder and director succession but, concurrently, the teachers, as well as some individuals in the city and state administration, were succeeded by others who had different priorities:

> It seemed to me, given how much self-governance there already was in the structure that it wasn't such a big thing who was the leader. And also because we had so much staff continuity up until about the same time I left. And a lot of people left around that same time to start new schools. Peter Steinberg left and Haven left, and Nancy Mann left and Jose left and so a lot of people were leaving during the same period that I left. And they were some of the sort of tough old-timers. Plus the fact that the district brought in a new superintendent who insisted that we take kids who hadn't chosen the school, around the same time. This was a few years later. And so there was a whole bunch of need for new teachers. So there was a much greater turnover around that time than I expected there would be. In my mind, two or three of us would leave…you know,

> they were each from different places. So I thought it wouldn't make so much difference (Deborah Meier).

Newer teachers and administrators lacked the history that the CPESS teachers had accumulated during those first ten years and attempted to make changes and leave their own mark on the school, rather than following their predecessors. In his analysis of leadership, Philip Selneck (1957) observes that when new managers attempt to "correct" the mistakes of the previous managers and hire staff that the manager trusts (but that the rest of the organization is unfamiliar with), disruptions may occur within the organization. This can lead to instability and staff turn-over.

According to a report offered to me by a staff member, in the 2000-2001 academic year, Division I (7th and 8th grade) lost seven out of eight teachers, "five in Division II [9th and 10th grade], and one in the senior institute (Dryer and Serksnyte 2002:4)." Those who became CPESS' later administrators also had interest in conducting business in their own manner:

> Lyle Walford came and worked with [us]…I thought he had this sort of attitude where he felt like he had to make his mark by improving the school. Some kids graduated through Lyle's guidance without completing their portfolios. So this sort of internal portfolio-driven quality of the school was sort of undermined by the new administrators who came in…Lyle when he first came was sort of interested in the alternative school. I remember [someone] telling me that he had this guy, who lives in the neighborhood still, I think – it was like his assistant. This young Irish kid came and was put in charge of computers. And just like went into Joe's [room] and just dumped everything off of his computer and took it without talking to him. Lyle went into the Division 2 humanities classroom, which had this really great archive, and they just said, "We're cleaning this out." So it was that kind of desire to make a clean sweep (Dan Patton, Humanities).

The importance of managerial succession remains at the forefront of alternative school organizational process as principals at other alternative schools also frequently leave their positions. A solution to this problem might benefit already-existing alternative schools and those yet to be established. Furthermore the routinization of various levels of charismatic leadership is essential (Weber 1978). The difficulty here stems from a lack of systematic knowledge about all the skills necessary for a leader of this type of institution and therefore an inability to find someone to adequately fill the leadership role.

THE MYTH…THE LEDGEND

The dispersion of the CPESS teachers was also in part responsible for the fracturing of the CPESS educational model into two versions of itself—the myth and the reality. The myth was an honest account of the school, albeit a very limited one. It was the “front stage” of CPESS (Goffman 1959)—the representation of a quality school put forward by CPESS graduates and teachers and administrators who went on to be successful and create new schools and educational programs. Yet, the “backstage” was absent in what many young teachers and new students and their parents learned about the school. The process of creating those graduates and CPESS-trained faculty and staff was not visible to most people interested in the school.

According to one teacher, the myth of the school often overwhelmed the reality. Teachers, parents and students in the later years who had heard about the school and were therefore interested in joining the community, were often

unaware of the amount of work it took to achieve those goals. The “word on CPESS” was that it was a safe school where teachers had a lot of freedom and the students went on to college. What was not as clear was the number of hours teachers put into meeting with each other and students or the amount of time to create, revise and present a portfolio. Students in the first ten years were more likely to understand the difficulty of the process, as they witnessed much of its development, and to know less about its outcomes. Those students and teachers who belonged to its first ten years knew the backstage of CPESS well—the amount of work necessary to develop and participate in a new educational model—but the front stage view of the positive outcomes only became visible as the first few groups of students left the school and became successful in their later lives.

> In the early years—the first five years—every student knew that they were part of something that was a different way of doing things and they knew what the habits of mind were, they knew why we were different and how we were different. The school started to become known as a very safe school so students stared to attend the school because of that reason not necessarily because of what we’re doing educationally and so we were forced then to deal with different kinds of student. A student who was not necessarily invested in doing something differently academically, or at least their parents weren’t. They were there basically because they wanted to get out of a rough situation and sometimes the kids that wound up coming to our school were rough. There were a lot of tough kids, as the years went on. So I think the things that we did not do that we could have prevented there is that we were not as vigorous in explaining to prospective parents exactly what the school was about and what was expected of the kids and the family (Jim Geneva, Math/Science).

> When you bring in new people you’ve got to realize that we had already developed structures that took a lot of time and discussions in order to create these things. When you put them in place, you know the amount of work that you invested already just to create that document. You’ve got somebody who is brand new who’s gonna read it, they may or may

> not agree with them but not understand why those decisions were made so it becomes a matter of ownership and whether or not that new staff really feels like they own whatever that document is, whether it is the curriculum, the exhibitions or whatever it may be so the dynamics start to change and they may want to go in a different direction or not understand why we were doing something to begin with and that belief in the habits of mind and all, that is not really imbedded in their belief system (Elias Boston, Math/Science)

According to the teachers' reflections, it appears that both new teachers and students were entering CPESS with a slightly skewed idea of what the school truly was.[56] The students did not understand the work that went into critical thinking and the effort necessary to complete fourteen portfolio items rather than take an exam. The process was also not apparent to the new teachers. According to some staff members, new teachers did not know about the many meetings, the process of creating, and in some cases using, CPESS' innovations—Habits of Mind, Essential Questions, portfolios and rubrics—and the sacrifices the staff made in terms of their union rights and requirements. New teachers were unaware of the structure within which teachers had freedom. For example, for the most part curriculum was set, but individual teachers could have some leeway in how they achieved the term's goals.

As veteran teachers moved on to establish or teach at other schools, the population of teachers at CPESS became more transient and less cohesive. As a result, it is likely that the teachers did not buy into the mission to the same extent as previous teachers had. That the strong voices of the founder and many of the veteran teachers were also gone may have softened the commitment to the

[56] One teacher commented that even the elementary school students no longer received tours of the CPESS classrooms.

school's mission and goals. Reviews of the school on *insideschools.org*, an independent website organized to provide information to parents about schools, included many negative comments which cited violence, undisciplined students and teachers, and high turnover rates of "good teachers."

> 'This is probably the most disgusting place to send a "normal" child to,' writes a parent. 'My daughters (7th graders) were continuously bullied, humiliated and berated by the other students and, most of the time, nothing was done. It was sooo bad that I had to obtain a safety transfer and finally home schooled my daughters during the last few months of the school year. The turnover rate is very high. Teachers cry in front of the children.' She writes that classroom management is a major problem and 'children are walking the halls or stairways at any given time of the day' (insideschools.org). [57]

The components of the CPESS organization that should have managed integration (Parsons 1951) did not adequately support the introduction of new teachers to the CPESS system. Some former teachers provided suggestions that might address this. They suggested that the reproduction and maintenance of the educational "spirit" of the school was essential to ensure the continuity of the positive educational experiences. Understanding the history of the school was critical. One former teacher explained that in a school where he later worked, the process of policy creation was recorded so that future generations of teachers could experience the process from the perspective of the original staff.

> When I opened up [the] high school, I made sure that I kept notes and minutes from the previous years and shared that with every year's new staff. So, for example, at the halfway retreat of the first year of [the] high school, we asked the staff and parents what does a…graduate look like after four years. And, mind you, this is the first year of the school, so we

[57] It should be noted that this was written in August 2004 while the school was in the midst of a major upheaval as it was preparing for separation into a middle and high school. Later comments, after the school lost most of its alternative aspects, were more positive.

> don't know, so it's like what do you want them to? So, we came up with a list of things in every single one of the subject areas. We posted them. We had notes and we talked about it so every year when we would welcome in a new staff, we would give them these notes for them to understand that this is what we talk about and in our notes was some of the rationale of why we did one thing or another. So, it was easier to deal with. It didn't make it perfect because some people, again, just read it to go along with but I think it was more transparent. (Elias Boston, Math/Science)

Another teacher suggested that maintaining relationships between the veteran and new teachers, as well as the stringent standards used to recruit and interview teachers,[58] were a necessary component for these schools. It followed from this that the school needed to ensure that complacency not set in its recruitment of both teachers and students. To maintain school diversity (which differs from diversity in general), the composition of the skills of the faculty and administration of CPESS had to remain close to what it was at its origins. The importance of the integration of new and existing members of these types of communities could be easily overlooked but was vital to the maintenance of these schools.

BREAKING OUT OF THE STRUCTURE

Simultaneous with those changes at the level of personnel, the school also went through a structural transformation. The changes in faculty socialization and integration contributed to a lack of recognition on behalf of the

[58] During their interviews, former CPESS faculty reported that the school administration was relatively "hands-off" when it came to the hiring and firing of teachers. Generally, the other teachers in the subject area or division controlled the recruitment, interviewing and removal of teachers. New teachers were selected through an interview process that included other teachers. Some teachers who taught during the later years complained that Smith did a lot of hiring on his own without the assistance of, or even consultation with, the rest of the faculty.

newer teachers of the importance of pedagogical items such as the Habits of Mind and portfolios. Teachers used them less and less until, as one graduate reported upon return to the school, “[The students] don’t even know what the Habits of Mind are.” A teacher added:

> There was big turnover every year, Debbie was gone, Paul was gone, Dave Smith was trying his best but the overall climate of New York City, in terms of their swing the other way, from saying, “great, we have an alternative school” to saying, “hey, these alternative schools. You’ve got to cut this out. We have to take these Regents exams. You’re no longer gonna be given a variance. You’ve got to do the same thing all the other schools do.” He was under that kind of pressure and I don’t know if even Debbie would have been able to stand up against that. So, he was not able to pilot the school though those waters. Discipline was getting out of hand. Only the most experienced and confident teachers were able to control the kids. There were a lot of people arguing about what should be in the 14 portfolios, what constitutes what kids have to defend, what they have to present. A lot of kids were putting forth work that some teachers thought was not of high enough quality. I just think that there was a lack of educational direction and therefore there were a lot of squabbles, a lot of different cliques formed amongst the staff. I was getting burnt out but not from the kids. I was getting burnt out because for like three years in a row, I had to mentor new teachers. (Jim Geneva, Math/Science)

It could be said that new teachers suffered from bureaucratic inertia (Hall 1977), a term used to describe those who participate in the means of an organization without an understanding of or interest in its goals. During the transition period between the school’s alternative roots and its more traditional current state, teachers explained that many new staff members participated in the school’s innovations without the knowledge of their origins or their purpose. While it may seem that participating in the activities of the school could be useful for their own sake, without awareness of their purpose, this type of bureaucratic inertia can be damaging to the overall school culture. For example, the Habits of Mind can be questions used in response to a particular assignment, or they can be tools to

teach critical thinking. Portfolios, also, could be a quickly complied collection of homework assignments or a composite of the student's knowledge, creativity, and conviction.

Another important aspect in the continuity of an organization is the relationship between the school and supportive outside organizations (Haveman and Khaire 2004). Some of the outside organizations connected to CPESS had very strong ties with Meier, and it is likely that those ties were weakened somewhat when Meier pulled away from CPESS.

> I think that part of it was the abandonment by Deborah of David Smith. I respect and admire David…I think that as the years went on and David tried to continue some of the traditions at Central Park East, he was not supported by the consortium or Deborah to the point that Debbie would be in the building and wouldn't even stop by to say hello 'cause I was in the building, saw Deborah but she wouldn't go by to see David. There was an article written last year, negatively, where Deborah was interviewed, and I felt very bad that that was the message that was put out there (Jim Geneva, Math/Science).

In order to deal with this "abandonment," the school was forced to mimic the other schools in the system to gain support and legitimacy. Within New York City schools, as in the United States generally, there was a shift toward further standardization, and, as a result, the non-Regents, portfolio structure became difficult to maintain (McNeil 2000). During this period, the New York City Commissioner of Education required all schools to remove any alternative assessment methods they may have implemented and begin to give the exams created by The New York State Board of Regents—the Regents exams (Dao 1995). Pressures at the state and local level made it very difficult for CPESS to maintain its innovative characteristics.

This is not to argue that the imposition of Regents exams signaled the end of alternative educational systems. The CPESS educational structure, however, was not created to support them, and the implementation of a testing system led directly to two critical issues. The structure of the school—based more on the Habits on Mind and the Essential Questions than coverage of particular aspects of curriculum—did not lend itself to multiple choice exams that tested students on their memories of particular facts, dates and formulas. For students to succeed on the exams, teachers would have to “teach curriculum and not students”. The other problem that arose was the difficulties and the time commitment in preparing students for two types of assessment—Regents exams and portfolios. David Smith—the director at the time—even sent out an email to former students asking for assistance in surviving this mandate.

The other schools within the New York Performance Standards Consortium—the collection of New York State alternative schools—were dealing with similar problems. Through the coalition of thirty schools, they were able to resist this decree and obtain a waiver from the exams until 2010. The faculty and staff of CPESS, perhaps because of the less cohesive staff or the departure of many of the strong advocates in the school, after reflecting on their situation, decided not to oppose the demands of the commissioner—in 1998, they left the New York Performance Standards Consortium and began to administer the Regents exams. As a result of this choice, they were ineligible to participate in the new waiver when it was eventually granted to schools in the consortium. Interviews indicate that it was difficult for neophyte faculty to learn how to

implement portfolios along with the exams. Therefore, the decision was eventually made at the superintendent level to suspend portfolios.

> I think that being that they were being forced to do the Regents stuff, they really didn't have the background or the support to prepare the students for Regents exams so the school scores showed to be very poor and the state report card, if you look at it now, shows that…the teachers didn't have a good understanding of what portfolios were, they did not have an understanding of how to even, what to ask for, or to expect. [They] decided to get rid of them, for now, and hopefully revisit them later, but there was so much work to be done there (Elias Boston, Math/Science).

This process is not limited to schools. Paul Attewell and Dean Gerstein (1979) examined a similar situation in which governmental policy forced a medical organization to change its processes, making it difficult for the organization to continue to be successful. The system-wide policy that forced all schools to implement the Regents exams also led to a change in CPESS' goals—a displacement. For the organization to continue, new goals had to be created (Attewell and Gerstein 1979). Though the annual report card on the Department of Education's website still announces the goal of the school as "*teaching students to use their minds well*," in order to remain viable, the more immediate goal of the school must be to pass the Regents exams. For those who still believe in and support the previous educational spirit, these new goals may also lead to role conflict (Attewell and Gerstein 1979) with the distinct goals of teaching students to think critically while teaching them to memorize facts. In this way, another type of isomorphism discussed by DiMaggio (1983) is also applicable. The institution that provides economic support to CPESS *coerced* the

school to change and become more similar to other high schools—to attempt a standardization of the high school system—and it did.

In order for faculty and staff at CPESS to accomplish their new goals, the pedagogy also had to change. The emphasis was no longer on the long term projects which may or may not have included the particular key concepts on the exam that year. The importance of the Habits of Mind, and therefore critical thinking, appears to have become secondary to the exam, a policy contrary to the school's long-held goals.[59] Students may have left CPESS with the ability to pass the tests but not necessarily with critical thinking and a love of learning.

Isomorphism also had other structural effects on the school. Teachers suggest that the school was easier to manage as two separate schools (a high school and junior high), but that separation destroyed the continuity of methods and community that worked well for the school in its early years. It also discouraged students from beginning in the seventh grade and going through all six grades rather than just enrolling for two or four years.[60] One teacher explained the importance of all three of CPESS' divisions and how the Habits of Mind held them together:

> The kids should come in with an understanding of point of view. Because that's what they kind of sort of do in the 7th and 8th grade. In 9th and 10th grade, if [they can] understand point of view, evidence, and connections before they left, then [the job was done]. And then they would get to the topic of relevance by the time they got to senior institute. And that it was the math/science people's job to really play with conjecture. That's how I broke it down intellectually for myself (Ellen Donald, Humanities).

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[59] Alternative pedagogy, however, may be creeping into the Regents system; one teacher explained that these tests now ask students to reflect and speculate.

[60] Students were also less likely to begin at the elementary school and proceed from kindergarten to the twelfth grade.

The school went through other structural changes. *Insideschools.org* reported that CPESS' new seventh and eighth grade school, Central Park East Prep (which was quickly discontinued and replaced by Central Park East Middle School[61]) placed students in clusters named for different colleges which identified the level of student—the more prestigious the name, the more prestigious the students. CPESS, the school that had been known for its distaste of tracking and its heterogeneous groupings, had abandoned that philosophy. None of the teachers or students I interviewed, who knew about the current state of the school or taught at the school through its transitions, ware familiar with tracked classes at the junior high school level.

According to teacher and student interviews, the high school community service program is also gone.[62] According to teachers, this is partially due to the death of the program director but also be a result of funding difficulties. Meier explained that for the original community service program:

> We got a specific grant for the community service program. That helped us solve the problems of teachers having more time for professional development. And we didn't have to take it out of something else, because we got a grant for the community service program that paid for

[61] This school is listed as Junior High School 13 on the Department of Education website which is the name of one of the disbanded schools that occupied the building when CPESS moved in. The new JHS13 is an intermediate school containing grades six to eight.

[62] However, the school report card for Central Park East Middle School states that "East Harlem Tutorial, Girls Inc., Museum of the City of New York, Mount Sinai, Educators for Social Responsibility, Center for Collaborative Education, Center for Educational Innovation, LUCE Urban Scholars Program, PREP FOR PREP, El Museo Del Barrio [and] approximately 20 other agencies provide community service placements for our young people." The report card for the high school mentions no similar community service. It may now be a requirement only at the middle school level (although whether it is required or not was unclear).

> Naomi and Ann Weiner and various other things that made it possible for kids to go off-campus…. [there were] 80 kids, each day, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th …And then it was also the internships for seniors. So she hired Ann Weiner to help her. So we were paying, essentially, less than two positions, because Naomi didn't have a teacher's license. She didn't have a BA. So she wasn't very well paid, and Ann Weiner wasn't so very well paid, so we had two not well paid people taking care of a fourth of the school every day.

The community service program was extremely time-consuming and also required additional grant money to fund. New staff may have been less enthusiastic about community service or may not have participated to the same extent in the weekly meeting time which was available because of the community service program. Change in leadership and problems of integration, as well as the educational environment (to be discussed below) forced CPESS to reexamine and change its organizational structure which was much of what made the school alternative.

ENVIORNMENTAL SHIFT

In addition to those changes which occur internally, organizations are also susceptible to changes in their external environments. These adjustments can greatly modify the structure of the organization as well as the goals they attempt to accomplish. They can also enhance the organization and the environment itself.

In New York, for example, educators and administrators have recently created a culture that emphasizes the importance of the small school. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg has pushed to create small schools around the City, and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has invested in similar schools in New York City and across the country.

While this is positive for the system as a whole, counter intuitively, it negatively affected the institutional viability of CPESS by leading to changes in the composition of the population of the school. In the 1980s, when CPESS was in its infancy, teachers and students from all over the city gathered to create the CPESS community. The choice of schools was limited. Students or teachers who wanted the unique teaching and learning experiences that CPESS provided had to come to the school. The population was diverse, racially, economically, geographically, and academically in its population of students and the teachers who found their way there. Teachers I interviewed traveled from as far north as Yonkers, as far south as East New York in Brooklyn, and as far east as Throngs Neck in the Bronx. Student respondents, as mentioned in the methods section, came from four of the five boroughs and from all over Manhattan.

Once small schools became part of the culture of the city, CPESS was no longer the only viable option. Small schools are now in every borough, and most neighborhoods have an alternative school within a short transit ride. The prevalence of small schools reduces the integration that was typical of the early years of CPESS. Because students no longer needed to travel to attend this school, they can remain in segregated neighborhoods and their segregated schools. Teachers, also, could choose schools closer to their homes. Students and teachers now had a choice of where to learn or teach and they could choose what was easiest. As New York City neighborhoods continue to be extremely segregated (Kozol 2005), the neighborhood schools reflect that segregation. In their interviews, several teachers explained the difficulty and importance of trying

to gather a diverse community for their subsequent educational jobs. Issac Richards described recruiting for a new school:

> One of the problems of our recruiting teachers is that we don't know…we could be stuck in the South Bronx, we could be in Jackson Heights—all those are fine places but its hard to recruit parents, teachers, etc (Isaac Richard, Humanities)

Another teacher added:

> The issues of race were much more blatant in East Harlem than they are in South Bronx. Because there aren't any white people there. It's much easier, just relax. Everybody's struggling. You didn't have kids imported from Washington Heights. At least, I don't have any kids imported from Washington Heights who are pale. Nobody's coming over from Riverdale. So it's a much less diverse population, and I think as soon as you do have a white middle class in your school, there are going to be other kinds of tensions that come up. And you need to put them all on the table. It needs to be part of your curriculum (Ellen Donald, Humanities).

The additional small schools and the consequent dispersal of interested students also led to the dispersal of parents. During interviews, both teachers and students spoke about the importance of having some very active parents who were willing to fight both for and against the school to better their children's education. The students I spoke to described the mixed levels of school activism among their parents—from those who "thought knowledge was important but not schooling" (Vincente Ortega) and only came to school for the required family conferences to parents who thought "learn as much as you can [at school]" (Lynette Saadiq) and visited the school constantly.

In the early years of CPESS, the importance of parents and families was emphasized. In fact, as previously mentioned, a meeting with parents was

required as a part of the interview process. Only one student was able to attend the school without a parent or guardian meeting:

> We did insist that the family come in for an interview. To find out, so that they wouldn't say afterwards, "But there's not this kind of exam." Or "The classes are multi-age." Or "You didn't tell me that they wouldn't graduate until they did their portfolios." And also one reason for the family was to establish right in the beginning that we expected to have a relationship with the family. We did the same thing when we started the schools in the Bronx and in Manhattan. We wanted to assert from the beginning the families needed to be in the know, not just the kids. There were one or two exceptions. I can't remember who the kid was, but we had one kid who we were very impressed with, because he persisted in getting into the school without his parents. And at some point we decided that was a strength of his, rather than thinking of it as a weakness, that he was so determined (Deborah Meier).

When asked to describe the role of parents in CPESS, Meier added:

> The parents' job is to worry about whether the school is really doing right for their kids. And if it is, then making sure that they're helping, being one party to helping the school remain true to itself. And if we're not doing the right thing for their kid, to give us a hard time until we do, or until they decide they want to leave.

Students and other teachers added that the voices of a few very vocal parents helped to make the school what it was.

> The first couple of years the parents, and, again, I think this is both good and bad, but the parents—everything little thing they would be questioning it, not even just saying "I'm concerned about this" but like "you're gonna mess this up" and "we're gonna go off the road" and "my kid is going to be ruined." Just after a few years, that just wasn't a big issue. Or at least it didn't feel like it was. Or maybe I just didn't feel it. The tone changed at a certain point…So CPESS was the only place in town, but then they started opening places like Beacon. So now, particularly for parents who were progressive – whatever that means – like your folks – but also more middle class, like [other students], well what happened? They opened Beacon in the Upper West Side. So [siblings of students] went to Beacon. So now all the parents, and the teachers, you're attracting [are] a different group…there's no way that first group of parents would have let Dave Smith do what he's done—which is to move away from portfolios. They would have yanked their kids. So there was pressure in a lot of ways. And then on top of it,

> parents [could] actually have a big deal of pressure [on] the system. (Isaac Richard, Humanities teacher).

One student who now works with teenagers observed:

> At one point my father was head of the Parents' Association at CPESS. And my mother actually went so far as to becoming a member of the Community School Board. At that point in time, I was in high school. The governing structure of the public school was very different and people could actually run to be on the various boards to return power to the schools. So my mom was on that board (Nick Tilton).

Because parents and Parent Associations change every four to six years, these same leaders cannot remain the backbone of the school. As the alternative schools became more numerous, the concentration of activist parents in CPESS decreased.

Economic resources were also dispersed across schools because funding for new types of educational experience had now to be shared with dozens of schools. Researchers claim that alternative schools cost slightly more per graduate (and significantly more per student)[63] than other schools and, without sufficient resources, many of the alternative aspects of those schools suffer (Steinberg 1998).

Without those funds, it becomes significantly more difficult for new faculty and staff to be integrated into the school. Meier explained that, in addition to the grant funding for community service, she also procured resources for advisory trips and retreats. As a new school, CPESS received additional funding until the first class had graduated. As explained previously, the school began to change after this point.

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[63] This will be discussed further in the next chapter

There were other policy implementations at the local and state level that led to alterations in the CPESS structure and pedagogy. Despite the push to open more small schools in New York City, the definition of small has changed. According to interviews, CPESS classes rarely had more than twenty students with advisories capped at around fifteen. State policy has now made it unlikely that any classroom in the City would have less than twenty-five students. Resource room classrooms—for students who require additional assistance—also became larger during the CPESS transition years. According to one resource room teacher "my caseload…grew from 20 to 40 in a few years…because the Board of Ed changed it from being capped at 20 kids to being capped at 40..it just meant that I would have more kids in the room at any given time… they would have less teachers to pay, but still service the kids. But the kids are the ones who lose out" (Rod Timothy).

Another teacher mentioned that City policies forced CPESS to change their admissions process. CPESS had always been celebrated as a choice school. Students would have to gather information about the school and choose to attend in order to be admitted. Local policy changed this requirement and began assigning students to the school who did not select it. This changed the school population by including students who knew little about even the "front stage" of CPESS before arriving.

To return to the question of a selection effect—that changes in the CPESS population contributed to such dramatic changes in the school—may lead one to question the functioning of the school without the ability to select its population.

This question is difficult to answer at this point without further research. As previously discussed, many students did make a conscious decision to attend the CPE schools. CPE1 received additional funds because of its integration efforts—attracting students to the school and district who had previously left (Meier 1995). While CPESS did not did not require a complicated application or an entrance exam, students had to select the school on their high school entrance forms. Current research on CPESS offers little evidence supporting or refuting a selection effect. However, fifty percent of students who entered the secondary school, however, did so after attending the elementary school so statistics for those students are more well-known.

> The Central Park East's schools have always had a predominantly African-American (nearly half) and Latino (about a third) student population. They are also among the few district schools that have maintained a steady white population, as large as about 25 percent in the elementary schools and closer to about 10 percent in the high school…well over half of our students have always qualified for free lunches, and some 20 percent meet the state requirements for being labeled "handicapped," thus qualifying for special state funds…In the mid-1980s we adopted a lottery system that favors neighborhood students and ensures fairness…the one exception to the lottery is that the CPE schools accept all siblings, to preserve our family orientation (Meier 1995:29).

The lottery system gives first priority to neighborhood students and then to equal proportions of the three "ethnic" groups—African American, Latino, and White (Bensman 2000). David Bensman describes four potentially distinct categories in the CPE population:

> Local Puerto Rican and African American parents looking for a better school, parents of children with learning or emotional difficulties, progressive White parents from the Upper East Side, and African American parents from Central Harlem who had sent their children to a Montessori school (Bensman 2000:14).

It has been hypothesized by some students that many of the White parents chose to remove their children from the alternative education model after completing the elementary school. While this research does not confirm or deny this possibility, it is a potential explanation for the lower number of White students at the high school level.

As I stated earlier, this research is not definitive on the topic of a potential selection effect. The maintenance of diversity at varying levels in the school, however, was important and as the Board of Education/Department of Education began to assign students to the school, the population became more homogeneous, and the diversity CPESS strove for was lost. This, along with changes discussed above, contributed to the decline in Central Park East Secondary School.

One of the most significant questions about alternative schools is their sustainability. Alternative schools that are still performing at their original levels are those that still have their original founders and many of their original faculty members—such as Urban Academy and, until recently, Humanities Prep. There is much concern about whether these schools can survive past the tenure of their founding administrators.

Early CPESS	Later CPESS
Classes < 20 Students	Classes > 25 Students
Resource Room = 20 Students	Resource Room = 40 students
Internationally Renown School	Rumors of the School's Closing
Single 7th-12th Grade Institution CPESS	Central Park East Middle School (7&8) Central Park East High School (9-12)
Concentration of Resources and Meier's Charismatic Leadership	Dispersion of Economic Resources
Balance of New and Veteran Teachers	High Rates of Teacher Turnover
Performance-Based Assessment	Regents Exams
Diverse Population	Dispersion of Students
Flagship Member of CES	Not a Member of CES
A Choice School	Assignment and Choice School
Community Service Program	No High School Community Service Program
One of Few Small Schools	One of Many Small Schools

Table 1
Changes in CPESS

The original CPESS institution has struggled over the last ten years. After the departure of Meier, the school confronted the same challenges as other alternative schools—trying to remain popular, effective and alternative in a system promoting more traditional methods. In the John Henry-esque fight, the school pushed to the end but collapsed at the finish line. The institution that once developed the CPESS philosophy—the school on 106th Street and Madison

Avenue in Manhattan—has maintained very few, if any, aspects of what CPESS once was. While some former CPESS students and teachers try to hold on to the old school, CPESS, as it was, has slipped through their fingers.

As an organization, the school suffered from problems of succession and isomorphism, as well as goal displacement, role conflict, and the dispersion of CPESS faculty, staff, students and parents. Yet, as CPESS went on to become a skeleton of its original model, other institutions reproduced CPESS' important aspects. There are now numerous schools that utilize group work and performance-based assessment and where students call teachers by their first names. Former CPESS teachers began new schools or took what they learned at CPESS to teach at other schools. Graduates of CPESS also report having taken advantage of their educational experiences as evidenced by the jobs they chose and how they performed in them. Through the example of numerous former teachers, students, and administrators of CPESS, the spirit of the school—the educational philosophy, structure and pedagogy—was widely disseminated. Central Park East Secondary School began a social movement that changed schooling and the ways in which it was evaluated and analyzed in the New York City public system. The next chapter will examine the survival and spread of elements of the CPESS educational spirit.

Chapter 7

Moving Forward, Looking Back

Organizational Evolution and Learning

Central Park East Secondary School no longer exists. In its place on 106th and Madison Avenue in East Harlem, New York, are Central Park East Middle School and Central Park East High School. However, the legacy of CPESS continues in the lives of its former students, teachers, and the institutions for which it was a model.

In 2005—one of those alternative institutions in New York—Urban Laboratory Academy High School (Urban) celebrated its twentieth anniversary. A former student, now in college explained, “Urban Academy is not just a school…. It is a family, a community, a place where students learn to define and defend their ideas through the use of analytical thinking and independent research (Julie Garcia 2005).” Another former student and recent college graduate described the way in which Urban Academy’s “unique” approach to education had affected his life choices: “It challenges students to take their education into their own hands…This is what stuck with me in my post-college year…This is what Urban teaches its students everyday: to make your own decisions and define your own path (Milton Jenkins 2005).”

Two years later, Humanities Preparatory Academy (Prep) celebrated ten years as an alternative high school. The founding and the current principals, as well as several students, were among the speakers. The former students explained how Prep had been their family and allowed those who were reserved

to find their voices. When asked how they would be different if they had not attended Prep,[64] the students responded:

> I would have felt more like a number and not a person had I gone to another school
>
> I would be less caring, less open, less confident [and] less friendly
>
> I wouldn't be as open minded or such a critical/analytic thinker. I gained self confidence and a lot of respect for learning..... If I had not gone to Prep I know I would be at a different point in my life

The students in my research responded to questions about their experiences more than ten years after the students had graduated from (or left) CPESS, yet they, and the staff, shared sentiments with students in later alternative school generations. Humanities Prep, a school that claims the core values of "democracy, mutual respect, cooperation, empathy, the love of humankind, justice for all, and service to the world" (*Coalition of Essential Schools 2006*) utilizes performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) and incorporates advisories. Urban Academy students are expected to complete PBATs which they refer to as prerequisites and proficiencies. They also make use of the advisory system and produce informational videos on inquiry-based education. CPESS popularized pedagogical methods and a structural model that many of the schools in the New York Performance Standards Consortium and The Coalition of Essential Schools have incorporated.

[64] In an earlier incarnation of this dissertation, Urban Academy and Humanities Prep were also included in the survey data. As the dissertation became more focused, these two schools were removed from the research. These are survey responses from the few former students who did the survey before it was closed.

In the final section of *Radical Possibilities* (2005), Anyon underscores the importance of social movements in creating changes in educational and other institutions. This chapter explores the role of CPESS in this process. This phase reflects Mullin's fourth stage of the diffusion of sociology sub-fields as key individuals who helped to create the school left to become a part of or establish other organizations. In this way, though the institution of CPESS did not maintain its center, it disseminated its alternative educational philosophy throughout the city's educational system and created similar institutions and, I will argue here, a social movement and a new organizational form.

SPREADING IT AROUND

> [Now] there are probably more CPESS-like schools in this country than there ever were before, even though it didn't take off in the way I would have hoped. I hoped it was going to be what most schools were, but the fact of the matter is, you know, there are 50, 100 schools like it in this country now, and there were none before us (Deborah Meier).

The current educational picture in New York City stands in stark contrast to what it was twenty-two years ago when the CPESS model developed. The average size of a secondary school in the city in 1988-89 was 943 (NCES 1991). Essential Questions and Habits of Mind had just been developed at CPESS. Neither the New York State Performance Standards Consortium (NYSPSC) nor New Visions—organizations that now create and/or support alternative schools—had been established. The Coalition of Essential Schools was in its infancy, The CPE Complex (CPE1 and CPESS) were two of a very few small schools, and high schools rarely, if at all, used performance-based assessments.

During the first five years of the school—what most of the staff would refer to as CPESS' heyday—teachers, staff, and students were socialized to the school. CPESS inculcated its values, goals and pedagogy into each member of the community. They could choose to embrace or reject that habitus, but most students agreed that the school became a part of them:

> I think that's what CPESS did well also, is expose students to very interesting concepts, very socialist type concepts about learning. Free education is a socialist concept anyway. (Ramon Quesada, student)

> I think there was some sort of political analysis that [the teachers] understood that what they were doing was about changing the status quo and that whether all the teachers believed it or just the ones that were guiding the culture of the school; it was kind of like this is changing the world. Getting these kids to graduate, getting these kids to believe in themselves and giving them the skills to go out there and make the world better. I really believed that that was something that Debbie instilled in me and at least the people in our advisory, that there was a sense of responsibility that we needed to have. I think that I would probably rather that it had been a little bit more pronounced in the younger grades because I probably think it would have helped us in the later grades but I also think that there were a lot of different mediums through which we got it. So like when I went to my college course, it was about what was wrong with the world and how do you fix it so it was like a theme. (Margaret Santos).

The staff also reflected on the lessons learned from CPESS and what they took with them to their later experience:

> I learned a lot. I learned a lot about how kids learn. I learned a lot about how schools run. I met wonderful kids and I think it was mutual in how all of us learned (Rod Timothy, Other).

> I think the notion that one could empower others, and one needed to empower oneself in order for everybody to succeed. I think a teacher needs to be always learning. And the reason for that is not just that you can be a step ahead, but that you can then return that to the next group of students. Because it's a constant – it's like a spiral that's always turning, going upwards. And you hope the spiral gets wider and wider. That means it involves a lot more people (Clarissa Edison, Humanities).

> I'm very hostile to the standard school model. I really try to instill great teaching models. Now I try to understand more what [other teachers were] trying to do. But I'm also sensitive to that issue that we mentioned about cultural frames. I'm interested in exploring how that really plays out with working class kids. And I'm very interested – the Grant Wiggins backward design thing I teach my students. I have debates with my colleagues who very often seem to underestimate what teachers can do, to me. They're very smart guys, but they come out of – one of them has a history Ph.D., one of them has a degree from Michigan in socialized education but they – the us/them separation. They see themselves as academics, not as teachers. And I'm less comfortable with that distinction (Dan Patton, Humanities).

Following McKelvey (1982, McKelvey and Aldridge 1983), we might consider aspects of this socialization as "competence elements" (comps). Comps act as "genes" in organizational evolution (the process by which organizations or organizational forms change). When members of the organization leave, they take their "comps" with them to contribute to the next organization in which they involve themselves.

> Comps are defined as the elements of knowledge and skill that, in total, constitute the dominant competence of an organization. Dominant competence is defined as the combined workplace (technological) and organizational knowledge and skills (e.g., differentiation, coordination, control, measurement of effectiveness, and organizing processes) that together are most salient in determining the ability of an organization to survive (McKelvey and Aldrich 1983).

After the first five years, CPESS lost its founding director and several of its teachers. During a turn-over in the city educational administration in which many of those sympathetic to alternative schools departed, several other teachers also left. Four of the teachers interviewed left the school within three years of Meier's departure; those four are mostly now administrators, principals/directors or educational consultants for small schools. As alternative schools became a specialty, members of the CPESS community left the school to work at other

institutions which enabled this new form to spread and grow, mirroring Mullins's fourth stage (1973).

Within ten years of CPESS' founding, NYPSC (1997) and New Visions for Public Schools (1993) were created. Meier formed the Center for Collaborative Education (1990) which was responsible for organizing or creating more than 40 schools in New York City. With assistance from various foundations and administrators, the wave of small schools moved quickly. Between 1991 and 1996, the New York City Board of Education initiated more than 100 small schools (Steinberg 1996). In fact, in one year (1993 -1994), it established 50 small high schools.

There are now 194 small schools in New York City, more than 40 of which label themselves alternative through their membership in the NYPSC. The Coalition of Essential Schools has a membership of 124 schools in 33 states, including 13 in New York City and four outside the United States that use the ten Common Principles to educate diverse populations of students. New Visions has assisted in the creation of 34 small schools in the New York City system and continues to work to increase small schools and alternative education.

According to most of the teachers I interviewed, it was the alternative school model developed at CPESS that spread throughout the New York school system and is now represented in the majority of New York's alternative schools. Strang and Soule (1998) describe the process by which a ritual, organization, tradition, or innovation may begin in one place in a society and slowly disseminate. The rise of small schools reflects a similar process. The highly

publicized successes and innovations at CPESS encouraged others interested in starting small schools to follow the example and simultaneously created teachers, students, and administrators who could and would take on that task.

Based on teacher interviews, newspaper clippings, and Annual School Reports, at least seven former CPESS teachers have moved on to found and/or be principals at other alternative schools, including East Side Community, The Legacy School, The New School for Arts and Sciences, Banana Kelly High School and Fannie Lou Hamer High and Middle Schools (Gonzalez 1995, Dillon 1995(a), 1995(b)). Others became teachers at different alternative schools, and some continued to bring some of CPESS' pedagogical principles to non-alternative schools. At least one former teacher is currently in the process of creating an alternative school. Another former teacher is a local superintendent of instruction for CPESS' school district. The Habits of Mind are mentioned by name in the statements of three of the NYPSC schools and implied in several others (Division of Assessment and Accountability 2005).

CPESS has also socialized hundreds of students—many of whom entered the teaching profession. Ten percent of former students interviewed have joined the teaching field, perhaps even more impressive, at least one has started his own alternative school. Others have created institutions concerned with teaching and service for low-income and minority students. Two former students are also directors or co-directors of alternative schools.

It appears that the CPESS model has significantly influenced the New York City school system. For example, every year Mayor Bloomberg adds more

schools to his small schools initiative to meet his goal of 200 new small schools in the city by 2010[65] (Department of Education Press Release 2005). One hundred and forty-nine of the secondary schools that opened in September 2005 were small schools created through Bloomberg's New School Initiative (Department of Education Press Release 2005). Consequently, that year the city boasted its "highest on-time graduation rate in more than two decades" (Herszenhorn 2006).

Bill and Melinda Gates have also supported this movement, giving slightly less than two billion dollars of foundation funds to ensure that small schools continue to be created and be successful (Katz 2003). Bill Gates recently ended most of his direct involvement with his company in order to focus more of his energies on the work of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, much of which concerns the emerging small schools all over the country. Meier herself has created several small schools in Boston, in addition to her work in New York City (Meier, Sizer and Sizer 2004). Chicago and San Francisco are two other examples of cities with their own small school movements.

A SOCIAL MOVEMENT?

The propagation of small and alternative[66] schools has been described as a "movement" by teachers, administrators, and educational researchers.

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[65] Coincidentally, this is the same year in which the waiver that alternative schools have from the Regents Exams expires.

[66] The small schools movement includes the spread of alternative schools as they are small schools. However, the alternative school movement does not include all small schools. Therefore the two will be used interchangeably, except when specifically referring to the alternative school movement.

> I could answer for the 10 years [I was there], and say that [CPESS] was at the forefront of a whole movement that gave—forced—education to take a look at itself and to really look at other ways of approaching students and delivering education. And I think CPESS did that very well for those years. And I think in many ways it continues through the teachers who have left and gone to new schools. Like there's Vanguard—and what's that big one on the West Side which of course is successful, but it isn't really alternative any more. Beacon. But it's interesting. There are several ones that really continued CPESS. So in that sense, it says to me that the philosophy is very vibrant and a good one. Who knows?...Our society thrives on firebrands. We need another firebrand to come on, or maybe a whole series of little kindling. (Clarissa Edison, Humanities)

Can we consider this a social movement, and is the social movement framework a useful one for analyzing the proliferation of alternative schools? Tilly defines a social movement as "a sustained series of interactions between powerholders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation" (Tilly 2002:689). These movements are developed through:

> 1) A sustained organized public effort making claims on target authorities
> 2) Employment of combinations…[of] forms of political action.
> 3) Participants concerned about public representations of WUNC: Worthiness, unity, number and commitment. (Tilly 2004:3)

The alternative school movement has a number of features that fit this model. The alternative school community represents a public effort to make claims against national, state, and local educational bureaucracies. Proponents argued that the current formation of the educational system was inadequate and failed to serve large numbers of members of that system. Teachers, parents, and students in alternative schools, who claimed to represent the mostly low-income and minority students in the public schools, struggled to build an alternative system.

In order to convince politicians and the general public of the merits of this new structure, supportive teachers and administrators have utilized several forms of political action including public meetings and petition drives. These actions continue in contemporary alternative schools: community members have demonstrated, rallied, and made numerous public statements about the detrimental effects of the current educational system on students and society. In addition, they have asserted that alternative schools can address those detriments. Finally, advocates of alternative schools have organized former and current students, teachers, parents, and administrators to appear at public meetings, write to media outlets, and publish work on the merits of an alternative educational system. An excerpt from an article on the website of Time Out From Testing—an organization seeking to change the assessment system of standardized tests—illustrates this mobilization:

> As events unfolded, parents of Consortium students organized a state-wide coalition of grassroots organizations. Time Out From Testing joined with the Consortium in a number of initiatives: rallies, petition drives, letter-writing campaigns, press conferences, and background briefings with legislators, policymakers, and members of editorial boards. Teachers, parents, students and members of the business community testified at numerous legislative hearings as did members of the academic community who presented research on the consequences of high stakes testing (Cook and Tashlik 2005)

The foundation necessary for the building of a social movement was discussed in an earlier chapter. Scholars of social movements suggest that there are also

several variables that can contribute to the growth and success or failure of social movements:[67]

1) dealing with counter movements (Swaminathan and Wade 2000)
2) dealing with divisions within (Clemens 1993; Rose 1997)
3) mobilization of resources (Edleman 2001; Swaminathan and Wade 2000; Jenkins 1983; Kladermana and Oegema 1987)
4) change agents (Strang and Soule 1998)

The standards initiative is the counter movement that has been the biggest threat to the existence of alternative schools. In response, those involved with alternative pedagogy assert that the New York City educational bureaucracy's capitulation to the standards movement has further hampered disadvantaged students through its focus on testing and a standardized curriculum. Conversely, alternative schools claim that their methods of assessment may do a better job meeting the goals of the standards movement than do standardized tests (Cushman 1993). One teacher discussed one of the texts on standards in mathematics:

> We were basing our math curriculum on things that were going on at the time in the late '80s, early '90s. The National Council of Mathematics Teachers started talking about the need to emphasize problem-solving using mathematics to enlighten the situation—statistics using mathematics to describe something. That's what we did a lot in the physics [class] (Jim Geneva, Math/Science).

Alternative schools continue to support research to examine and evaluate their educational methods with the hope that providing information to the public will help to change the educational bureaucracy. They have also taken measures,

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[67] Generally, social movement literature has been divided between new social movements theories, which focus on the identity-based and quality of life movements of the middle class, those movements which emphasize resource mobilization and movements of the working class, and more traditional collective action theories (Pichardo 1997; Edleman 2001, Jenkins 1983).

including legal ones, to oppose the standardized tests that have come to represent the standardization counter movement.[68]

> On August 19, 2001, the lawyers representing the Consortium filed suit, claiming that the Commissioner had acted in an "arbitrary and capricious manner." The legal papers number almost 3000 pages and include twelve volumes of affidavits. Affidavits from Dr. Ted Sizer, Dr. Walt Haney, Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, Deborah Meier, Dr. Linda Mabry, Dr. Robert Stake and many others are included in the court papers (New York Performance Standards Consortium).

While students in most schools in New York are still required to take the standardized exams, as a result of this legal action, members of the NYSPC have been able to bypass theses exams and hope to continue to do so once the waiver expires in 2010. In 2005, members of the alternative school community also drafted a bill that was submitted to the state legislature. This bill would "amend the education law, in relation to directing the Commissioner of Education to develop alternative assessments for Regents exam" (Bill# A06286). While the waiver gives a level of legitimacy to the alternative schools and their assessment methods, the bill would institutionalize it.

The alternative schools that are members of New York Performance Standards Consortium are united in their stance in favor of performance-based assessments. Each school, however, maintains its distinct application of performance-based assessments (PBATs), and, therefore, they have some fundamental differences. Some schools consider standardized tests a welcome addition to their students' education, while others adamantly oppose such tests. The high schools differ in numbers of PBATs they require—some schools have

[68] There are some alternative schools which do give Regents while also implementing performance-based assessment.

seven, others only four. The alternative school movement has contended with divisions in a manner that allows individual schools to maintain different approaches but encourages them to form a coherent whole against the effects of standardization. Each school agrees about the importance of small size and PBATs and agreement on these features unites different schools within the movement. These differences, though, can comprise fault lines that may lead to divisions within the movement, or, in extreme cases, differences may multiply, and schools may opt out of the movement

Resource mobilization is perhaps where individual alternative schools and the alternative school movement face the greatest difficulties. Several categories of resources are important to the school reform social movements. Swaminathan and Wade categorize resources into four general types: “people (both leadership and cadre); expertise or prior experience; financial and information resources; and legitimacy (2000).”

The alternative school movement has done an adequate job of engaging external allies, developing a variety of supporters—from both inside and outside of the academy. For example, the Board of Advisors of Urban Academy includes professors, judges, and city council members—all of whom assist in assuring the continuity of alternative education. The list of individuals who have testified or written affidavits in support of the alternative school also includes a variety of professionals (New York Performance Standards Consortium 2001).

Beyond the mobilization of external allies, the schools within the movement also needed to assemble teachers, students, parents and administrators to advance the movement.

> At one point in 2001, parents, teachers and students held a rally in Albany that drew more than 1,500 people, focusing the public's attention on the Consortium and assessment as a critical issue. In Rochester, Consortium schools helped organize the Coalition for Common Sense in Education, a group that linked members of the academic community with concerned parents and teachers (Cook and Tashlik 2005).

Many of the individuals recruited to the movement also bring a level of expertise that further contributes to the growth of alternative schools.

During the growth of the movement, the human resources—professionals, administrators, teachers, and students—that were once exclusively focused on the support of CPESS were dispersed around the city. Though these resources have perhaps expanded in number, they are more thinly spread. While this may contribute to the mobilization of the larger social movement, a single school, such as CPESS, no longer has these resources at its exclusive disposal.

Financial resources can also be critical to the success of a social movement. Deborah Meier and Ann Cook (the co-director and co-founder of Urban Academy), for example, spent much time and energy cultivating relationships with individuals, foundations, and other organizations to procure resources for their schools. Financing has been the focus of significant contention in the debates about alternative schools. Many educators have argued against the wide-spread implementation of small schools—citing the greater per student cost for smaller schools. A two-year study of 128 small schools in New York found that these schools spent $9,038 a year for each

student compared to the $7,628 spent in traditional schools (Steinberg 1998). The success rate of the students in alternative schools, however, translates into more graduates than traditional schools. Therefore, the initial difference becomes only $25 per graduate because much of the early investment in traditional high school students does not translate into high school graduates. Despite this cost difference, the initial cost per student for alternative schools makes the charismatic leadership role, and the resources that accompany it, essential. Meier described the resources need to run the school in an interview:

> We made a deal with the City that they would give us extra funds until the school reached its final year, because they did that for most new schools. And we also argued that if we were going to do something very different–and we didn't exactly know what we were doing–we needed money—kind of professional development money—that schools that were just doing the same old thing didn't need. Because we had to figure out new things that others were just following what always was done. And we got that agreement. They tried to renege on it at one point, but I got a Macarthur at just about the time they tried to renege on it, which was at the end of eighth grade (because seventh and eighth grade were really part of the [elementary/middle school] district). And it wasn't until ninth grade that we were in the high school division. So then they tried to renege on that, and I said, "well, then we won't start a high school. We'll cap it at ninth grade." And since they said this to me exactly the same time that the story hit the newspaper that I'd got a Macarthur for this school, they went back. And then Exxon Corporation gave us a grant for professional development—and for professional development in particular focused on graduation requirements. Because one of our commitments to the state and to the city was that we would not graduate kids on the basis of credit hours or tests. We would graduate on the basis of performance assessments. But we had to design…figure out what those might look like. And then try to get support from other people for helping us develop.

The New York Times asserted "Deborah Meier...was a key to New York's success in obtaining the [Annenberg grant given to schools in the city] (Celis 1994)." Some of the teachers who were interviewed suggested that charismatic

leadership led to CPESS' current decline. Because the necessary funding was so closely tied to charismatic leadership, the administrations that followed that of Meier and Schwartz were unable to access the same level of resources that their predecessors had.[69]

CHARISMA

As a leader in the small and alternative schools movement, Deborah Meier was an important component of the human resources needed to expand the presence of the schools. Meier also acted as a change agent and an institutional entrepreneur (Strang and Soule 1998) who was able to take lessons learned at CPESS to create schools in Boston. In addition, she participated in the creation of small schools in the Julia Richmond Educational Complex,[70] considered to be the "poster child" for school disaggregation.

In reflecting on different types of authority, Max Weber (1946) might characterize Meier as a charismatic leader because while she eventually held the rational/legal position of teacher, principal, director, and co-director, it was her non-principal authority—her ideas and vision—that led teachers to follow her into this new type of educational institution. Teachers who taught at CPESS were not

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[69] One student suggested that this was the result of leadership switching from white to black as Meier and Swartz are white and David Smith and Bridgette Bellitiaire, who took over as co-directors, were black. A former teacher, who dismisses this viewpoint, felt that the downswing of the school was evident before the leadership had entirely changed racially.

[70] Julia Richmond was a huge comprehensive high school which was both failing and dangerous. Meier, Cook and others collaborated together to close the school and, it its place, create several smaller schools including a high school, an international school, an elementary school, a head start program and a school for developmentally disabled. It was the success of this school that led to the disaggregation of most of the other comprehensive high schools in New York City (Toch 2003, Clinchy 2000).

assigned to teach there; they chose to come to this particular school, and, though there was little evidence of success during the early years, they were attracted to the school because of the reputation of Meier, the other school leaders, and the school itself. One teacher explained her reasons for joining the CPESS community:

> So I think the connection with the Coalition of Essential Schools was a part of it. Just the general tone when I walked into the building, and just meeting Debbie were the factors that influenced me. As well as Ann's advice (Chiara Salvator, Math/Science).

Deborah Meier was born in New York in 1931 and educated at a variety of prestigious private schools around the country. She became interested in the educational process and became politically active in the public school movement in New York City. Meier strove to discover how to bring the private school experience to public schools. Through the encouragement of the district administration, she was able to create Central Park East elementary school in 1974. This was followed by two other elementary schools and a high school in East Harlem (School 2001; Richardson 1994).

An article in *The New York Times* written three years after the creation of CPESS lauded Meier as an innovator and a leader:

> Some educational planners, who have looked at the successful school, sigh, 'If only we could clone Debbie.' They have a point. Leading schools on an officially uncharted course is more difficult than managing schools in the often failed ways prescribed by the system. It calls for unusual talent, energy and daring (Hechinger 1987).

As Weber observed (and many other scholars have documented), one problem with charismatic leadership is that such leaders are transitory.

> In its pure form charismatic authority has a character specifically foreign to everyday routine structures. The social relationships directly involved are strictly personal, based on the validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities. If this is not to remain a purely transitory phenomenon, but to take on the character of a permanent relationship, a "community" of disciples or followers or a party organization or any sort of political or hierocratic organization, it is necessary for the character of charismatic authority to become radically changed. Indeed, in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only *in statu nascendi*. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both. (Weber 1978:246)

If the leader is a change agent and/or an institutional entrepreneur, she must move on at some point. Without the “gift of grace” that held the followers to the specific individual, authority falters. As Weber suggests, an essential lesson in maintaining alternative school leadership—besides the integration of new members—is transforming authority from charismatic to rational/legal.

Despite the importance of charismatic aspects in the development of CPESS, a case can also be made that Meier’s influential leadership encouraged both teachers and students to bring their CPESS experiences to new situations. These individuals, in turn, became leaders and change agents as they took the “comps” that they gained at CPESS—such as ideas about school structure, pedagogy and curriculum—to other institutions (McKelvey 1982). For many, CPESS became a training facility that could demonstrate to a teacher how alternative education could be accomplished. These lessons could be transferred to another school.

> Peter Steinberg was a lead UFT organizer for years before he came. And he only came to Central Park East and taught there so that he could understand the model and then build his own. I mean, that kind of commitment to a cause? It’s like how many people would be like, “Oh, I’m going to go back and teach and then open my own school.” He went and he taught and he came to understand completely what Habits of

> Mind meant on a completely kinesthetic level. Like, this is how kids acquire knowledge. And then went to open his own school (Ellen Donald, Humanities).

BRAND NEW FORMS

The growth of social movements shares aspects with the creation of and the pathways by which new organizational forms spread (Davis and McAdam 2000; Rao, Morrill and Zald 2000; Strang and Soule 1998; Swaminathan and Wade 2000). Similar to social movements, the creation of new organizational forms also requires interactions with the environment and the mobilization of resources.

The alternative school movement also follows this pattern as the small and alternative institutions represent a new organizational form for schools.[71] As both the impetus of a social movement and a new organizational form, CPESS became a model for other schools. One teacher explained:

> If Central Park East was still what it was, it would be a model school. It had been, for many years, the model school that people came to visit to see what education reform could look like. And we would have tours in there every other week, of people looking at the school. And that was an incredible educational experience for the kids…I think you guys knew that people were coming to look at you guys. Then there would be tours, and there would be tour leaders. And there was a community service job around tours of the building. It was a model of educational reform for the years that Debbie and Paul were there. And to not have it is a huge disadvantage to those of us who are creating new schools. Because there is no place to go and see that's what it's supposed to look like (Ellen Donald, Humanities).

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[71] The small school model existed previously, but those pushing for school efficiency, overlooked this model in favor of larger schools (Tyack 1974). The more recent push for small schools represents a renewal of the small school's model even while the specific attributes of the CPESS alternative school model has been largely absent in public schooling.

As social movement theorists point out and I discussed in some detail in the previous chapter, the environment within which an organization exists can also determine the success or failure of the new form. Swaminathan and Wade (2000) note that when an early model finds success in a particular environment, this can encourage the growth of other movements. CPESS' early successes may have led to the expansion of similar educational reform movements such as those associated with charter schools.[72]

The evolution that leads to the development of new organizational forms can also be examined analytically. Bruderer and Singh (1996) employ a model based on a genetic algorithm. Essentially, this model examines the selection or abandonment of particular elements from older or fading organizations in considering the design of new ones.

These organizational aspects have been referred to as "routines"[73] or "competence elements (comps)" and include such "elements of knowledge and skill…[as] scheduling, maintaining machines, hiring and training competent workers, measuring quality and productivity, or controlling deviations from intended goals (McKelvey and Aldridge 1983:112)." In Bruderer and Singh's formulation, some of these comps would be deemed successful and would be selected by the founders of new organizations. Others aspects of these same organizations would be discarded. If an environment is hostile to a particular element—for example, the use of a human-run assembly line—members of later

[72] The charter school movement is a larger discussion outside of the scope of this dissertation. Some charter schools are also alternative schools.
[73] Routines are similar to comps but represent behaviors within an organization which other organizations observe and adopt (Romanelli 1991).

organizations would not select that element when designing a new organizational form. In addition to those elements which are discarded or co-opted for a new organization, there are other features which are part of the initial design of a new organization and are later assessed by members. They make a decision on the success or failure of those components and change them accordingly. While some aspects are fairly easy to change in an organization—the manner in which products are distributed, for example—others are more likely to remain fixed because of the difficulty in changing them once they have been established. This evolution of elements is an organizational learning approach: individuals in organizations learn the types of elements that are successful in an environment and adapt their organizations to match those types (Bruderer and Singh 1996).

Newly created organizations adopt “comps” from different parent organizations. Each new generation of organizations maintains some elements—those that have allowed the highest level of organizational fitness for its “parents”—and changes others to adapt to its environment. The following section will examine the theory of organizational evolution from this perspective, exploring those features of CPESS that have gone on to be reproduced in other schools, those that have been eliminated and those that are still in the experimental stage.

LESSONS LEARNED

> [I think the mission of CPESS was] to address some of the serious problems with our public school system, especially in regards to how it services students of color…I think CPESS showed that there is a possibility to do that. That it’s a goal that’s worth pursuing on its own. I don’t think it quite achieved [it] fully… It was kind of a new thing. I feel it was a new idea and I feel like it needed, like any new idea, it needs to be

> worked out–it needs the kinks ironed out–so if there's ever a second incarnation that can sort of build upon recognizing the weaknesses of the earlier model and maybe fix that, it can probably do it better (Frank Huerta, student).

Alternative educational institutions are still at early stages of their evolution. Yet, there are several components that have become fixtures in alternative schools and others that continue to be considered as experimental. One way of establishing whether specific traits fall into one or the other of these categories is to determine how valuable or successful the students, teachers, and administrators found them to be. Assuming instrumentally rational actors, teachers who moved on from CPESS would not take, in their entirety, any "competency" with which they disagreed or believed to be a failure. In addition, students will not go on to reproduce what they judge to be the less successful routines in their future teaching and learning. Rather, successful comps will be reused and improved upon and those deemed to be less successful will be discarded.

Former students reported that the structure of CPESS was an important aspect of their experience. Junior high school, specifically the seventh and eighth grades, is often a time for adjustment. At CPESS, the students had not only to adjust to their movement from elementary to high school, but they also had to adapt to the alternative methods that would be the foundation of their remaining secondary school years. Most of the problematic social relationship issues reported by former CPESS students occurred in the seventh and eighth grades; it is likely that the two years before entering high school, in which students developed a "shared respect," was a useful structure.

> In 7th and 8th grade it was good because you got a chance to spend an enormous amount of time with people and you got a chance to really like…. they got a chance to teach the subject and you got a chance to really learn it… it was a package deal and what they naturally intended to do was to give you a well-rounded experience (Shane Rayburn).

Among those students who could remember the structure of the CPESS course schedule, most were positive about what they saw as its natural progression: gradually decreasing time spent on a subject along side an increasing disciplinary specificity. The two-hour blocks of Humanities and Math/Science (or later the three large blocks of Humanities, and Math and Science) of Division 1 and Division 2 were closer to the one classroom model from elementary school. This structure allowed the students more time with a single group of students, cultivating friendships through advisory and group work. The Senior Institute, with shorter classes and more offerings, was closer to traditional high school and college experiences.

> I think that they worked pretty well with our age groups. I remember thinking how cool it was…that the sort of deep chance to do much more and do much longer projects that could be more multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary so I think they worked really well and then when you got the Senior Institute, it was a very clever idea on their part because we immediately felt that we were more grown up because we switched classes more often and had some control over our schedule so it felt like we had made this enormous leap in terms of our responsibilities and so for me that made me that much more excited about the school but I loved the longer blocks also, as a younger student (Kenneth Edwards).

Based on evidence from the teacher and student interviews, attendance at social and professional development events, and analysis of websites and public documents from the Coalition of Essential Schools, most New York alternative schools do not include seventh and eighth grades. This structural “comp” is still in the experimental organizational learning stage. Some schools, such as Fannie

Lou Hamer, that accept younger students, are separate junior high and high schools. The previous chapter recounted some of the problems in managing a combination junior high/high school in New York. Specifically, locating the two schools in two different administrative divisions, subjects them to different regulations, which can make it difficult to manage education at both levels.

On the other hand, the Senior Institute model has become a fixture in many alternative schools. It is considered to be an opportunity for juniors and seniors to participate in activities, preparation for life after high school, that are essential to those in that age group and less important to younger students. According to former students, what is still problematic in the Senior Institute model is the balance between the “hippy,” “coddling,” alternative-ness of the school and the more traditional structure of most colleges. Schools continue to struggle with this.

> It would be hard to say as a high school graduate whether I felt prepared because I didn't know what to expect. I mean, I guess I would have said yes but based on no information whatsoever and, then after having gone through my undergraduate experience, I would say I was prepared ‘cause it goes right back to the analysis. I wasn’t prepared for the competition...so academically, yes, but it terms of college survival skills, no (Lynette Saadiq).

The staff-run, flattened hierarchy of the school and its community/family-orientation has survived in alternative schools, but although CPESS participants assess the structure positively, aspects of it are open to question. Some students indicated in their interviews that a lack of structure or excess of freedom contributed to some students feeling lost.

> The reason why I was lacking in certain things was because they gave us so much freedom. They gave me so much room. They gave me room

> to hang myself…they gave me too much freedom, and I wasn't mature enough to handle it. So, I had the opportunity to walk out of class whenever I wanted to. Wander around the halls and cut class and I really think they could have been a little more stricter with not all students but maybe certain students, like me (Vicente Ortega).

This leads to something of a dilemma. On the one hand, the administration of CPESS was concerned with undercutting hierarchical relationships, but, on the other hand, some students expressed a need for more structure. This dilemma is still being debated by educators and practitioners in alternative schools.

Heterogeneous groupings continue to be prevalent in alternative schools. The number of students of different ages and skill levels varies across schools. Some schools have four grade levels in one classroom, others, only two. Mixed ability groups can be beneficial to lower-performing students without being significantly damaging to those at a higher academic level (Linchevski and Kutscher 1998), but this structural element can lead to problems. Some of the students who were considered more advanced in their classes stated that they often were left alone and received less attention than their less motivated classmates. Some explained that because they were able to get through the work quickly, they did not feel challenged by their classes. Most alternative schools have tried to address this issue by encouraging stronger students to work collaboratively with weaker students so that both share and reinforce the knowledge they have gained.

> Well, when I was in high school, I guess because maybe I wasn't completely challenged, I spent a lot of time helping other people and I remember sitting there with people and going over assignments with them and then watching their face when they actually figured out what I was saying and they got it and I just felt like that was the most amazing feeling, to just see that "the eureka moment." (Joy Vernon).

Both community service and internships remained important elements of CPESS for years. Most students agreed that

> Community service is very important. I think there needs to be a couple of seminars about what the greater lesson of community service is…what I remember is that we did community service once a week for half the day or some shit like that. Another day could be the seminar on the lessons of community service or conversations, like seminars in the true seminar form where groups of kids around tables talk about what they do, just like fleshing out lessons. (Ramon Quesada)

According to the former students the number of choices available and the synthesis and reflection on students' experiences through portfolios made the internships valuable. Some alternative schools have sought to address the disconnect between community service and the rest of the curriculum by developing more emphasis on service and internship and/or requiring internship seminars, journaling, or at least frequent discussions to accompany their work.

> The service learning was different [in the other school where I taught] as we wanted every single kid who started in the seventh grade in service learning had to be in a school…We needed to make sure that they were supervised by licensed teachers so we had them in all kinds of places...I remember visiting all of the sites which I'm not sure that we, at Central Park East, actually got to visit the kids at the sites. We actually did an evening where we invited all the people who were actually supervising the students in all their service learning places to come and meet all the teachers and the staff so there was a communication. The kids had to do a journal about their service learning experience which I don't remember that we did that at Central Park East and then, later on, we were able to get internships based on students interests whether it was law, whatever it was, so that was a challenge, getting enough internships based on the students needs…It was more tied into advisory so a lot of the stuff that needed to happen for service learning happened at advisory whether it was journal writing, discussion of things that the kids were experiencing at the job and had to deal with…so it was interesting, I think, it added another level to what it was at Central Park East. At Central Park East, I think it was more about us having common planning time than the meaning the students got out of the students service learning. I don't know if that's how it was intentionally done but not enough was done with it at Central Park East. I couldn't tell you what every one of my kids did

> for service learning at Central Park East. I could tell you at [my other school] simply because it was part of the advisory (Elias Boston, Math/Science).

Advisories have been adopted by most alternative schools, but CPESS students varied in their assessment of the advisory. While most students remembered their interactions with other students and their advisor as positive, they had trouble recalling specific activities. Some students said they stopped attending advisory altogether during their second year in the Senior Institute. At other schools, the specifics of the structure differs, but the role of the advisor—the teacher who knows the student best—and their advisees—a built-in cohort of potential friends— is standard.

Critical thinking has strong organizational fitness; nearly all alternative schools used a project-based curriculum including the writing and rewriting of drafts, group work, presentations, self-evaluations and performance-based assessment tasks. Several alternative schools even use the Habits of Mind in their classrooms.

Math and science classes tend to be a weakness in most urban public schools, not only the alternative ones (Schwartz 2007; Sheppard 2006). Research gives credence to the approach adopted at CPESS and other alternative schools, though. Students trained through project-based mathematics are much more likely to be able to respond to unfamiliar mathematics problems as well as apply mathematical procedures to their lives outside of the classroom (Boaler 1998). Students complained about the lack of transparency in their

curriculum; some felt they did not know what mathematical concepts were being taught or what they were missing. When they learned Mayan math, for example

> I question that one. It's integrated. We're learning about the Mayan civilization and shit. Why are we learning about Mayan math? What is it teaching us about basic mathematics? I don't know (Ramon Quesada).

Most students were not aware that the purpose of teaching Mayan math was to demonstrate base-twenty mathematics. Alternative schools have regularly changed their mathematics curricula to try to find the balance between what students learn and how they learn it. Some of the more intricate details of the curriculum each year become an exercise in experimentation and environmental adaptation. Some alternative schools have also chosen to implement the state-wide tests in addition to their performance-based assessment.

Similar to many small, liberal arts colleges, athletics was not emphasized at CPESS. CPESS' gym classes were very much like recess. A few students complained about the lack of attention to athletics and fitness.

> That was the one thing that I didn't like about CPESS. That there wasn't really a real gym class. An average gym class, you know, sports, not sitting there gossiping with your friends (Julia Juarez).

For other students, the lack of a formal gym class relieved the pressures that often come with organized athletic activities and allowed them the opportunity to socialize with others, further cementing their social relationships. The unstructured time gave students—many of whom were dealing with serious issues at home and in their neighborhoods—a place to play, which most schools lose after the sixth grade.

Alternative schools have sought to make gym a fixture in the schools. Since many of the schools share a building, the use of the gym is not always an option. Also, given the use of the school's limited resources to keep classes small by hiring more teachers, hiring an athletic director might not be a priority. Some alternative schools have found programs at external athletic facilities for their students. Again, there is no easy solution to this issue and though a few students complained about the school's athletics, most did not mention it at all.

This new organizational form—the CPESS model of alternative schools—is still in its infancy. Bruderer and Singh (1996) might place it in the second or third generation in the process of organizational evolution. At this stage, there are still many aspects that are uncertain and schools continue to experiment with various elements. For alternative schools, however, there is a structure on which to build and several fixed "routines" and/or "comps" that other schools continue to copy, recreate and modify.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR SMALL SCHOOLS

When CPESS was initially established, the director, faculty, and staff recruited students to the school. Students were recruited from the neighborhood of the school but also from other schools. Word of mouth ensured the reproduction of the school population. At alternative schools, recruitment should occur regularly to maintain the diversity in the student body. Staff, including administrative staff, should also be recruited and, deliberately socialized to alternative education and integrated into the school.

An acknowledgement and understanding of the intricacies of running an alternative school are also necessary. The “comps” and “routines” that create the new organizational form all need to be sustained for the institution to flourish. When members of the alternative school community can only see the big picture, many of these comps may be lost and this may negatively affect the school. This may occur, for example, if teachers are hired based on their leadership ability or organizational skills rather than strictly their skills and knowledge of teaching or a particular subject matter.

There are individuals in other school systems across the country who would like to use the alternative school model to make changes in their system, yet not all systems allow for the overhaul it would take to prepare some systems for small schools. What does one do to achieve these effects without a complete systemic rebellion?

While CPESS had a small population to begin with, some of the ways in which a “feeling of smallness” was created among the students could be replicated within a larger school. The schools-within-schools (SWS) model can create smaller academies within the larger institution, allowing even those in a large school to feel as though they are in a smaller environment. Dividing the school into divisions or houses, where smaller groups of students and teachers get to know each other much more intimately than they would otherwise, can create the voluntary community so important to high school, and elementary school students (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993).

Project-based assessment becomes more difficult the larger the school, but it was an important reform for CPESS and its former students. When students can, both collaboratively and individually, create larger projects to demonstrate their competency in courses, a school can begin to progress towards an alternative school model. The Coalition of Essential Schools encourages and assists in this type of implementation. Project-based assessments mimic projects that are often found in higher level college courses, however, some attention should be given to the skills needed to attain those higher levels.

A theme running throughout this dissertation is the system within which the school is situated. CPESS, and other alternative schools, have repeatedly had to justify their pedagogy, structure and methods of assessment to the educational bureaucracy as it moves away from their innovations. Unlike some other school systems around the country, the New York City public school system has recently embraced the idea that smaller schools are beneficial to students and that public school students have historically not had access to them. New York City's Mayor Bloomberg and school chancellor, Joel I. Klein, have mandated the creation of small schools that should be available to all students. This is a step forward for advocates of the CPESS model, but at the same time the Mayor, Chancellor, and other educational policy makers have pressed for further standardization, restricting teachers in classrooms and creating fewer opportunities for students to exhibit their knowledge in alternative ways.

Full implementation of alternative schools is not easy and requires a system with a lot of flexibility, a willingness to experiment, and an interest in the process of organizational learning to find a “fit” model (Bruderer and Singh 1996). New York City was such a place thirty years ago when it had administrators in the Board of Education and the Chancellor's office, who were willing to take a chance. Even more essential were educators such as Anthony Alvarardo, a district superintendent, and Seymour Fliegel who advocated for change in the system.

The students were also a very important part of the school and the educational system. For them, the toolbox educational method seemed to be effective. Most of the students I interviewed for this dissertation expressed the view that while they didn’t always have the raw materials—the memorized facts that many schools emphasized—they were given the tools and taught how to use them. The correct balance, however, between facts and tools is still to be discovered. Recognizing this toolbox idea is important for both teachers and students. This is another alternative aspect that can be implemented in systems where complete alternative school creation is difficult.

CONCLUSION

Central Park East Secondary School is a useful lens through which to examine the interaction between different aspects of urban education, urban communities and underserved populations, as well as the nature of schools, organizations and social movements. The research addresses questions about alternative education, in general, and Central Park East Secondary School, in particular.

Central Park East Secondary School lasted nearly ten years before it transformed into a different organizational form. CPESS was effective by some measures and not by others. The students of the school—mostly low-income, urban and minority students—applied to, were accepted, and attended colleges at higher rates than similar students nationwide. CPESS sought to minimize the effects of the hierarchical structures of society in the classroom and maintained its more communal structure for more than ten years. In their post-secondary classrooms, former CPESS students tended to feel comfortable expressing their viewpoints in discussion and writing papers. In college, some of the problems they recounted, such as financial difficulties and family, school, and occupational role conflict, were similar to those of their counterparts from other public high schools. Perhaps unlike their traditional school counterparts, however, they struggled more in lecture courses that emphasized standardized tests and memorization.

While this may lead some educators to question the value of a CPESS education, many CPESS teachers and administrators assert that it should be the

schools that value memorization, lectures and standardized tests that should be open to question. Despite the number of CPESS alumni who did not finish college, a number still lower than similar students from other schools, CPESS enrolled more students in higher education, thereby providing more of them with an opportunity to stay and graduate.

Furthermore, CPESS teachers felt they had given the students the tools necessary to become public intellectuals who used their knowledge to change the larger world and citizens who recognized the importance of democratic values and the responsibilities of citizenship.

Overall, much of the decline of CPESS can be attributed to external forces. Changes in educational policy as well as the availability of educational resources posed a serious threat to CPESS. Internal changes, which I examined through the lens of charismatic leadership in Chapter 7, also had a role in its decline.

The spread of alternative schools, although generally a positive change, had the latent dysfunction of recruiting away much of the school's leadership—teachers, administrators, students and parents. When CPESS began, as explained earlier, it was one of a very few alternative schools. Parents who wanted their child to have a quality public education selected CPESS. Teachers who wanted to teach at a small, alternative public school, usually taught at CPESS. The educational environment, however, in New York and across the country changed. Hundreds of small (and many alternative) schools now exist where once there were few. CPESS, and the movement it created, played a

major role in that transformation, particularly in urban areas. In New York City, as a result of the proliferation of such schools, students can now choose schools near their homes, as can teachers. There is no longer a concentration of students and teachers interested in alternatives to traditional education in one place.

The expansion of small and alternative schools may unintentionally have had a negative effect on the diversity of students, teachers and parents in those same types of schools. Most students are less likely to travel to a particular alternative school if there is a comparable one much closer to their home. At the classroom level, many students now find themselves in segregated schools reflecting their segregated neighborhoods.

The case of CPESS also illustrated the external constraints on the extent to which educational institutions can promote social change. With respect to structure and pedagogy, the school was forced by the system within which it was situated to yield to external educational policy decisions that, at the school level, transformed the alternative educational system to such an extent that it could no longer be called alternative. External constraints also limited social mobility. While students were able to attend college, occupational and economic inequalities posed challenges that kept some students from graduating from college.

Finally, despite some of the problems Central Park East Secondary School confronted, the school proved to be a space within which students who are overwhelmingly underserved by the urban public school system could be

educated and prepared for productive participation in life outside of school. It contributed to a dialogue on urban education and was at the forefront of a social movement to address some of the inequalities inherent in the educational system. While, clearly, the recent proliferation of alternative schools has not produced large scale economic equality or equivalent social mobility for low-income and minority students, it does appear to be a small step that has the potential to reduce the disparities in educational access and open the possibility for the spread of future educational reforms.

The application of an organizational sociological approach to this research has served as a useful framework to analyze the development of alternative schools, their strengths and weaknesses, and the processes by which proponents of alternative schools built a social movement. Approaching alternative schools as smaller components of a larger unit and examining such concepts as leadership, “routines” and “comps”, organizational environment and goals facilitates the comparison and analysis of corresponding outcomes between these schools and those with more traditional outcomes.

In addition to its application to the sociology of education, this framework is significant because the process that the CPESS organization went through is not uncommon. Similar to the way in which the CPESS organization experienced dispersion as a result of its own success, other organizational structures have undergone similar disintegrations and eventually produced strong social movements and organizations that have outlived their parent organizations. For example, the Niagara Movement, a civil rights organization founded by W.E.B.

DuBois in 1905, lasted only four years before it collapsed. Yet, it trained and dispersed members to strengthen and build other organizations, eventually resulting in the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1910 (Rudwick 1957). This supernova effect—in which an organization breaks down in part because of its own success but its remnants nurture the growth of other movements or organizations—adds nuance to the analysis of organizations and their outcomes. This study suggests methodological approaches for analysis of different and similar organizations and movements. It provides a framework which can enhance future research into education, organizations, and social movements and will, I hope, provide an opportunity for others to continue this research and further expand the field of knowledge.

Gramsci used the term “war of position” which he contrasted with “war of maneuver” to characterize a political moment when a frontal attack is not possible. In applying this concept to the Black freedom movement, Omi and Winant suggest that a war of position describes a period characterized by “the existence of diverse institutional and cultural terrains upon which oppositional political projects can be mounted (Omi and Winant 1994:81).” As an organization at the forefront of an educational social movement, CPESS may yet prove to have been an important element in a “war of position,” serving as an alternative educational institution to those embodying more traditional educational methods and preparing students whose future choices reflect social

concerns—a necessary requirement in creating the groundwork for other social and political movements in the future.

Appendix A: The Coalition of Essential Schools Ten Common Principles

1. The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well. Schools should not be comprehensive if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's central intellectual purpose.

2. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by "subjects" as conventionally defined. The aphorism "less is more" should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.

3. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.

5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services. Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching, to provoke students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.

6. Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students not yet at appropriate levels of competence should be provided intensive support and resources to assist them quickly to meet those standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, should be used to better understand the learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation - an "Exhibition." As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school's program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of credits earned" by "time spent" in class. The emphasis is on the students' demonstration that they can do important things.

7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation ("I won't threaten you but I expect much of you"), of trust (until abused) and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers should be emphasized. Parents should be key collaborators and vital members of the school community.

8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and a sense of commitment to the entire school.

9. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total student loads per teacher of 80 or fewer pupils on the high school and middle school levels and 20 or fewer on the elementary level, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in many traditional schools.

10. The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.

Appendix B: Students' Neighborhoods

Neighborhood	%
Bedford Stuyvesant/Crown Heights BK	1
Central Harlem/Morningside Heights MN	19
Chelsea/Clinton MN	3
Downtown/Heights/ Park Slope BK	1
East Flatbush/Flatbush BK	1
East Harlem MN	11
Flushing/Clearview QS	1
Fordham/Bronx Park BX	6
Gramercy Park/Murray Hill MN	1
High Bridge/Morrisania BX	3
Jamaica QS	1
Northeast Bronx BX	4
Pelham/Throgs Neck BX	1
Ridgewood/Forest Hills QS	1
Southwest Queens QS	1
Union Square/Lower East Side MN	4
Upper East Side MN	3
Upper West Side MN	12
Washington Heights/Inwood MN	21

Appendix C: Demographic Information on Survey Respondents

Demographics	Mean/Percentage
Age	30.5
Male	34.6
White	13.2
Black	40.8
Latino	22.4
Combination	18.4
Other	5.3
Lived With Both parents	30.8
Lived With Mother	39.7
Lived With Father	6.4
Number in Household	3.24
Siblings	.81

Education	Mean/Percentage
Graduated High School	98.6
Attended College	89
Graduated from College	69
Associates	3.6
Bachelors	67.9
Masters	21.4
Ph.D	3.6
Medical	3.6

Income	Mean/Percentage
Poor (HS)	17.9
Working class (HS)	49.3
Middle class (HS)	28.4
Elite (HS)	1.5
Poor (now)	1.5
Working class (now)	40.9
Middle class (now)	50
Upper middle (now)	7.6

Current activity	Mean/Percentage
Full Time job	82.4
Part Time job	13.2
Child/home care	14.7
Full-Time school	13.2
Part-Time school	11.8

Appendix D: Additions to Survey

After conducting a pilot study with several students, the nature of the research changed slightly. The number of schools was changed from three to one and the scope of the surveys and interviews were broadened. Following this change, the early respondents were contacted and asked to respond to the newer questions. From this group, only two students filled out the new questions on the survey.

The questions which were not included in the first survey instrument included those on family structure, some of the questions on activities after college and values, the breakdown of life satisfaction and skills.

Appendix E: Selected Student Survey Questions

30. Using the high school in which you spent the most time, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. My high school felt like a community	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
b. I did not feel close to the other students	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
c. I did not feel close to the teachers	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
d. I participated in the activities of the school	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
e. I am glad I went to that school	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
f. I felt like I had good relationships in the school	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
g. I felt like I did not get a good education at the school	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
h. I liked the structure of the classes	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
i. I liked the structure of the school	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

32. For each of the following activities, please specify your level of participation while in high school.

Activities	Actively Participate	Sometimes Participate	Never Participate
a. Art in a museum	**1**	**2**	**3**
b. Art at home	**1**	**2**	**3**
c. Art in neighborhood	**1**	**2**	**3**
d. Classical dance class	**1**	**2**	**3**
e. Modern dance class	**1**	**2**	**3**
f. Music lessons	**1**	**2**	**3**
g. Band	**1**	**2**	**3**
h. Athletics in the school	**1**	**2**	**3**
i. Athletics outside of school	**1**	**2**	**3**
j. School-based community service	**1**	**2**	**3**
k. Community service outside of school	**1**	**2**	**3**
l. Social activities with friends at home	**1**	**2**	**3**
m. Social activities with friends outside of home	**1**	**2**	**3**
n. Reading comics	**1**	**2**	**3**
o. Reading newspaper	**1**	**2**	**3**
p. Reading books (beyond those required)	**1**	**2**	**3**
q. Reading magazines	**1**	**2**	**3**
r. Religious activities	**1**	**2**	**3**
s. Community organizations	**1**	**2**	**3**
t. Any type of classical music performances	**1**	**2**	**3**
u. Other types of musical performances	**1**	**2**	**3**
v. Chorus	**1**	**2**	**3**
w. Drama	**1**	**2**	**3**
x. Other school clubs	**1**	**2**	**3**

51. How would you describe the institution you received your first degree or certificate from or the last one you attended? You may use any descriptors such as the level of diversity, type of area (rural/urban/suburban), type of school, student and teacher morale, graduation rates, student activities, student support, class size, financial resources, or any others you can think of

55. Using the institution you received your first degree or certification from, or the last one you attended (if you did not finish), how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. My college felt like a community	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
b. I did not feel close to the other students	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
c. I did not feel close to any of the professors	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
d. I participated in the college environment	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
e. I am glad I went to that college	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
f. I felt like I had good relationships in college	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
g. I felt like I did not get a good education at that college	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
h. I liked the structure of the classes	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
i. I liked the structure of the college	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

57. For each of the following activities, please specify your level of participation after high school.

Activities	Actively Participate	Sometimes Participate	Never Participate
a. Art in a museum	**1**	**2**	**3**
b. Art at home	**1**	**2**	**3**
c. Art in neighborhood	**1**	**2**	**3**
d. Classical dance class	**1**	**2**	**3**
e. Modern dance class	**1**	**2**	**3**
f. Music lessons	**1**	**2**	**3**
g. Band	**1**	**2**	**3**
h. School-based athletics	**1**	**2**	**3**
i. Athletics outside of school	**1**	**2**	**3**
j. School-based community service	**1**	**2**	**3**
k. Community organizations	**1**	**2**	**3**
l. Social activities with friends at home	**1**	**2**	**3**
m. Social activities with friends outside of home	**1**	**2**	**3**
n. Reading comics	**1**	**2**	**3**
o. Reading newspaper	**1**	**2**	**3**
p. Reading books (beyond those required)	**1**	**2**	**3**
q. Reading magazines	**1**	**2**	**3**
r. Attending religious services	**1**	**2**	**3**
s. Union membership	**1**	**2**	**3**
t. Classical music performances	**1**	**2**	**3**
u. Other types of musical performances	**1**	**2**	**3**
v. Chorus	**1**	**2**	**3**
w. Drama	**1**	**2**	**3**
x. Clubs	**1**	**2**	**3**
y. Religion-based volunteering	**1**	**2**	**3**
z. PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) Meeting	**1**	**2**	**3**
aa. Political party membership	**1**	**2**	**3**
bb. Charity fundraising	**1**	**2**	**3**
cc. Protests or demonstrations	**1**	**2**	**3**
dd. Boycotts	**1**	**2**	**3**

58. For each of the following activities, please specify how often did you participated after high school?

Activities	Often	Not Often	Never
a. School Volunteering	**1**	**2**	**3**
b. Problem solving at home	**1**	**2**	**3**
c. Organization or club volunteering	**1**	**2**	**3**
d. Watching TV for fun or relaxation	**1**	**2**	**3**
e. Union volunteering	**1**	**2**	**3**
f. Exercising	**1**	**2**	**3**
g. Political party volunteering	**1**	**2**	**3**
h. Problem solving in your community	**1**	**2**	**3**
i. Going to the movies	**1**	**2**	**3**
j. Voting (at the local level)	**1**	**2**	**3**
k. Voting (at the national level)	**1**	**2**	**3**
l. Contributing to political campaigns	**1**	**2**	**3**
m. Contacting public officials	**1**	**2**	**3**
n. Contacting print, television or radio media	**1**	**2**	**3**
o. Going to parties in your city	**1**	**2**	**3**
p. Signing a petition	**1**	**2**	**3**
q. Creating a petition	**1**	**2**	**3**
r. Travel out of your city	**1**	**2**	**3**
s. Serving on a committee or as an officer of a local organization	**1**	**2**	**3**
t. Public meetings in your city	**1**	**2**	**3**
u. Watching or listening to the news	**1**	**2**	**3**
v. Problem solving at your place of work	**1**	**2**	**3**
w. Problem solving at school	**1**	**2**	**3**
x. Other volunteering	**1**	**2**	**3**
y. Discussing current events with others	**1**	**2**	**3**
z. Discussing social issues with others	**1**	**2**	**3**
aa. Discussing ethical issues with others	**1**	**2**	**3**
bb. Discussing the economy with others	**1**	**2**	**3**
cc. Discussing international relations with others	**1**	**2**	**3**
dd. Discussing religion with others	**1**	**2**	**3**
ee. Discussing your personal life with others	**1**	**2**	**3**

64. What would you like to be doing ten years from now? Check all that apply: □ Working Full-time □ Working part-time □ Child/home care □ School full-time □ School part-time □ Other

65. Please, specify _____

_____

_____

68. To expand on the previous question, how would you rate your satisfaction in terms of your:

	Very Unsatisfied		Neutral		Very Satisfied
a. Education	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
b. Job	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
c. Family life	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
d. Personal growth	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
e. Economic situation	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
e. Living situation	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

79. What is your current marital status?

□ Single – never married
□ Married
□ Living with a companion
□ Divorced
□ Separated
□ Widowed

80. How many children do you have?

□ 0
□ 1
□ 2
□ 3
□ More than 3

What year was your first child born?

_____

81. How important are the following to you personally

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not at all Important
a. Becoming accomplished in the arts	**1**	**2**	**3**
b. Becoming an authority in your field	**1**	**2**	**3**
c. Influencing political structure	**1**	**2**	**3**
d. Influencing social values	**1**	**2**	**3**
e. Raising a family	**1**	**2**	**3**
f. Having administrative responsibility for others	**1**	**2**	**3**
g. Being well off financially	**1**	**2**	**3**
h. Helping others who are in difficulty	**1**	**2**	**3**
i. Making a theoretical contribution to a science	**1**	**2**	**3**
j. Writing original creative works	**1**	**2**	**3**
k. Creating artistic work	**1**	**2**	**3**
l. Becoming successful in your own business	**1**	**2**	**3**
m. Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	**1**	**2**	**3**
n. Helping to promote racial understanding	**1**	**2**	**3**
o. Keeping up to date with political affairs	**1**	**2**	**3**
p. Becoming a community leader	**1**	**2**	**3**
q. Integrating spirituality into your life	**1**	**2**	**3**
r. Improving your understanding of others from different countries and cultures	**1**	**2**	**3**
s. Producing an original work	**1**	**2**	**3**

82. For each of the following, please mark where you learned the skill by circling the (L) where you learned it a little and the (W) where you learned it well. You may mark more than one column for a skill and you do not need to mark every column.

Skill	Learned before CPESS		Learned at CPESS		Learned at college or program		Learned on my own		Learned on the job		Never really learned
a. Read critically	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
b. Participate in discussions	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
c. Defend point of view	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
d. Ask for help	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
e. Write essays	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
f. Think analytically to solve problems	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
g. Take multiple choice exams	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
h. Artistic and creative skills	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
i. Computer skills	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
j. Read for pleasure	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
k. Use the library	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
l. Be open to other ideas	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
m. Take essay exams	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
n. Take short answer exams	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
o. Organization	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
p. Take notes from readings	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
q. Take notes in class	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
r. Help others	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
s. Think critically	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
t. Getting along with people who are different	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
u. Leadership	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
v. Interpersonal skills	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
w. Time management	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
x. Presenting ideas and information effectively when speaking to others	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
y. Risk-taking	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
z. Self-confidence	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
aa. Spirituality	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
bb. Revising work	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
cc. Memorization	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
dd. Adaptation	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
ee. Applying concepts learned to real-world problems	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
ff. Persuasion	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	**L**	**W**	□
	Learned before CPESS		Learned at CPESS		Learned at college or program		Learned on my own		Learned on the job		Never really learned

Appendix F: Selected Student Interview Questions

Before High School

Parents/Guardians

1. Where were your parents/guardians born?
2. What about their parents (your grandparents)? Were they born here?
3. Did your parents/guardians go to school here?
4. Did your grandparents go to school here?
5. What kind of job did your parents/guardians have when you were in high school?
6. What were your parents' educational philosophies? (ex. What did they think was important about schooling?)
7. What was the neighborhood like where you grew up?

Schooling

Now I'd like to go on to discuss your schooling

8. How would you describe your educational experiences before you got to CPESS?
(9. What were your experiences like in elementary school?
10. What were they like in junior high school?)
11. What kinds of resources did you have at home? (in terms of school related materials or programs)?

School Selection

12. Do you have any idea how you and/or your parents heard about CPESS?
13. Why did you and your parents choose the school?

Educational Experiences

14. How would you describe your educational experiences at CPESS?
15. Looking back at it, what is your earliest memory of CPESS? What is your last?
16. How would you describe your study habits at CPESS? (if you had any) (ex. How much homework did you do? How? How much reading?)
17. Did anything or person make you try to change your study habits or encourage them to stay as they were?
(18. How did the school influence those habits, if at all?
19. How did your parents influence those habits?
20. How did your friends?)

Did your parents/guardians ever visit the school while you were attending?
Did your parents/guardians come to family conferences?

Social Relationships

26. How would you classify your social relationships at CPESS? Why?
27. Can you describe the group of students that you hung out with at CPESS?
28. Could you name your group?
29. Thinking about the group that you most associated with, what were your interactions like with other groups?
(30. How did you treat other groups?
31. How did they treat you?)

32. Did you feel boundaries between you and other groups?
33. How did you become friends with your fiends?
34. Why do you think you chose each other? Stuck with each other?
35. How similar were you with your friends?
36. How similar were they to your friends outside of school?
37. Thinking about your primary group(s), how many members did you stay in contact with after you left/graduated? For how long?
38. How many members outside your group did you stay in contact with after school? For how long?
42. What did you think of CPESS' teachers? (Do you think they worked hard? Cared about students?)
43. Did you have good relationships with them? Can you give an example of a good/bad interaction.?

44. What you see as being the unique aspects of CPESS?

Looking back at your experiences, I'm going to ask you about some of those aspects of CPESS and how they worked for you.
Advisories
Block Scheduling
Testing
Community Service
Portfolios
Extras
Athletics

62. Overall, how well would you say CPESS worked for you?
63. Did you know other students who CPESS didn't work well for/worked well for?
64. What do you see as being a/the benefit of the school?
65. Where would you have been/gone/done if you didn't go to CPESS? In terms of school, work, values, attitude, skills?
66. What were your processes to prepare for life after CPESS? Did you have help? What kind? From who?

Outcomes
67. What would you say is the most important thing you took away from CPESS?
68. Would you send your kids to CPESS, as it was when you attended?
69. Do you remember the habits of mind? What are they? Can you think of any ways you have used them?
70. What do you believe was the mission of CPESS?
71. How successful do you think they were in achieving those goals?

College
Educational Experiences
72. How would you describe your educational experiences after CPESS?
73. When you first got to college, was it what you expected? (Was it easier? Harder?)

74. When you first got to college, did you feel prepared? (For tests? Lectures? Studying? Class participation?)
75. Did you find that there was a difference between how you learned in different types of classes? (ex. Small/large, lecture/discussion, science/humanities)
76. What were your study habits in college?
Did you have similar relationships with other students when you were in college as you did in CPESS?
Did you have similar relationships with professors as you did with teachers in CPESS? (Were there teachers you could talk to?)

CPESS
80. Can you give me an example where CPESS helped you in college?
81. Can you give me an example where CPESS hindered you in college?

Profession
97. Why are you interested in your current profession?
98. What are some of the skills your current profession requires of you?
99. Where have these skills been developed?
100. What do you think makes you and your profession a good fit?
101. What is your dream job? Why?

Other Activities
102. How do you spend your free time?
(103. What types of activities do you participate in when you're not working?)
104. What kinds of activities would you like to participate in?

110. Examining your life now, did your schooling experience change how you raise your kids? Work with your family? View the world around you? View education?
111. Do you know what the people from the neighborhood you grew up in are doing now?

Memorabilia
113. Do you have any memorabilia from CPESS? (portfolios, pictures, letters, projects, diaries, journals, school reports, art, jacket, t-shirt, bags)

Appendix G: Sample Atlas Codes

Academic Accolades
Academic Focus
Accountability
Activism
Additional Work for Teachers
Administration
Advisor
Advisories
Advisory Trips
Arts
Assessment
Athletics
Attention
Background
Big Picture
Calling
Curriculum
Citizenship
Class of 1991
Class of 1992
Cliques
Collaboration
College Challenges
College Classes
College Visits
Comfort
Communication
Community
Community Active
Community Service/Internships
Competition
Connections to CPESS
Contributions of Teachers
CPESS in school/workplace
Creating Curriculum
Creativity
Critical Thinking
Cultural Capital
Current CPESS
Debbie
Democracy
Economics
Educational Background
Educational Challenges
Educational Path
Emotional Development
Evaluations
Expectations for Students
Experience
Extracurricular activities
Families
First Impressions
Founding
Freedom
Fun
Gateway Professions
Global Perspective
Graduation
Group Work
Guidance
Habits of Mind
Heterogeneous Grouping
Humanities
Ideal CPESS Student
Impressive Students
Individualized Learning
Institution Rites
Intellectual
Interdisciplinary Education
Language
Large School
Leadership
Life-Long Learning
Life Satisfaction
Life Skills
Making a Difference
Math/Science
Meetings
Mock Trials
Occupation
Origin of Friendships
Other Organizations
Outcomes
Outside Influences
Parental Background
Parental Educational Philosophy
Parental Influence
Pedagogy

Personalized grading
Personalized Learning
Personalized Occupation
Politically Active
Politics
Portfolios
Preparation for College
Presentations
Process to CPESS
Professional Development
Projects
Race Issues
Reasons for CPESS
Recruiting Staff
Relationships
Resources
Respect
Responsibility
School Conflict
School Diversity
School Neighborhood
School Philosophy
School Size
School Structure
School Support
School Visitors
Science
Senior Institute
Skill
Social Movement
Social Relationships
Social Structure
Struggling Students
Students for CPESS
Study Skills
Success
Supplementary Education
Support from Others
Teacher Dedication
Teacher Socialization
Teachers
Teachers Leaving
Tests
Theories
Tools
Traditional Classes
Traditional Experiences
Training to Teach
Transfer
Transition to College
Travel
Trust
Type of Citizen
Unconventional Classes
Unintentional Learning
Union
Voice
Weaknesses
Well-Known Students
Why CPESS?
Work Level

Appendix H: Selected Teacher Interview Questions

Coming to CPESS
1. How did you find out about CPESS?
2. Why did you choose to teach here? What was the process through which you ended up at CPESS?
3. How would you describe, generally, your experiences at CPESS?
4. What did you see as the unique aspects of the school?
5. Why did you buy into the school?

School Goals
6. What are the goals of the school as you see them?
7. How do you try to accomplish these goals in your classes?
8. Do you think that these goals have been achieved? What was your evidence?
9. Was their a particular expectation of what kids would do after high school?

Classes
10. What kinds of theory, ideas or motivations did/do you use to structure your curriculum and classes? Why? (please explain)
11. Did you teach in different divisions? What were the differences as you saw them?
12. Did you ever teach a long block? (How did you feel about the long blocks? How did you feel about team teaching?)
13. How much outside instruction did you have in structuring your classes? (How did you decide how much covered 'less-is-more'?)
14. How much did your course change over time?
15. How many courses did you teach? *(*Which courses?)
16. What was your favorite course to teach? Why?
17. How did you feel about the pedagogy of the school (Exhibitions? Group work? Presentations?)

School Structure
26. What did you see as the strengths and weaknesses of heterogeneous groupings?
27. Have you had students who you felt needed less help than others? How did you handle that? What happened to them?
28. Did you have any students who you felt need more help than others? How did you handle that? What happened to them?
29. Did you have students who you felt needed another school (students who were lost)? How did you handle that? What happened to them?
30. Did you have trouble reconciling these groups in the same classroom?
31. Did you think the school worked better for some over others?

CPESS as a Job
42. What did you most like about CPESS as a school? As a job?
43. What would you change about CPESS as a school? As a job?
44. Did you ever feel burnt-out? When? How? What do you do?
45. How did you reconcile family and work?
46. How many hours did you work over a typical day?

47. What were the skills that this job required of you?
48. How would you rate or categorize this job as compared to others you've held? In terms of stress, enjoyability, time commitment, benefits?

Personal
55. What are you doing now?
56. How did CPESS influence what you did afterwards?
63. Did you have any training/orientations to teach before you began? For an alternative school? For CPESS, specifically? (How did you prepare to teach at CPESS?)
64. What has been your most enjoyable job? Why?

Reform
74. Where do you see CPESS' place in the larger picture of educational reform?
75. In order for alternative schools to exist, they must and have fought against some of the norms of education. Did you believe that was important? Why? (While at CPESS? What about before going to CPESS? After leaving CPESS? Do you participate in other acts of resistance? Like what? Why do you think it's important?)
76. Would you choose to teach at CPESS again? (As it was? As it is now?)

Appendix I: Division of Assessment and Accountability Annual School Report

2002-2003 ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT

New York City Public Schools
Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

Manhattan Superintendency **H.S. 605**

HUMANITIES PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Grade Levels: 9 through 12
Students on Oct. 31, 2002: 181 Students on June 1, 2003: 169

School Mission Statement

It is our mission to provide a philosophical and practical education for all students, an education that fosters creativity and inquiry, encourages habitual reading and productivity, as well as self-reflection and original thought. We strive to exemplify the values of democracy: mutual respect, cooperation, empathy, the love of humankind, justice for all, and service to the world. Our curriculum and pedagogy prepare students for the rigors of college work and motivates them to desire and plan for a higher education, moving students toward higher levels of intellectual engagement. We also seek to provide a haven for students who have previously experienced school as unresponsive to their needs as individuals. We wish for all students to find their voice and to speak knowledgeably and thoughtfully on issues that concern their school, their world. We aid students by personalizing their learning and by democratizing and humanizing the school environment.

Principal's Statement

Humanities Prep is a Coalition of Essential Schools National Mentor School that offers a personalized, college preparatory learning experience to our diverse student body. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the academic curriculum highlights student-centered strategies of teaching which utilize portfolios as a major aspect of assessment. The school's social curriculum involves intensive student participation in the development of a democratic and just community.

Special Academic Programs

Arts collaborations with the Guggenheim, Jazz @ Lincoln Center, the Kitchen, Dia Arts Center; NYU college collaboration; Kaplan SAT prep; College Preparatory Math Program; Community action internships; leadership training; legal studies with Morgan Lewis law firm; PEN author series; Learning Leaders tutoring; NYU tutoring.

Extracurricular Activities

Peer tutoring; conflict mediation; "Prep Central"; after-school support; baseball, bowling, basketball, soccer, softball, volleyball, swimming, track and cross-country; college preparation workshops; Chess Club; Ping Pong Club.

Community Support

New Visions for Public Schools; New York Cares; Coalition of Essential Schools; iMentor; Chelsea YMCA Teen Center; PENCIL; New Leaders for New Schools; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the Center for the Arts; the Institute for Learning Technologies, Teachers College; NY Performance Standards Consortium.

Parent/School Support

An active PTA and SLT work cooperatively with teachers and the administration in support of our students. Parent conferences are encouraged for student planning and support. Participation in our performance-based assessment system. Regularly scheduled student performances, pot luck dinners and fundraisers help make Prep a real community.

The Division of Assessment and Accountability (DAA) compiled this report primarily from central databases and information provided by this school's principal. Throughout the report, N/A indicates that information was not available or did not apply to this school. The 2002-2003 Annual School Report is issued in cooperation with the New York State Education Department. Consult the Parent Guide for an explanation of the data in this report. Other DAA reports can be obtained online at www.nycenet.edu/daa.

Appendix J: The CPESS Habits of Mind

The Habits of Mind were developed by the CPESS teachers and administrators in order to create thinking tools for the students. These five questions or statements were usually hung in the classroom so they were readily available to students in their work. These also became a part of the grading rubric teachers used in their assessment of students. The habits of mind were initially framed as questions. However, in later years, many teachers presented them as an acrostic which spelled out the name of the school:

(C)onnections (How is it connected to other things?)

(P)erspective (What is the viewpoint? Is there another way to look at this?)

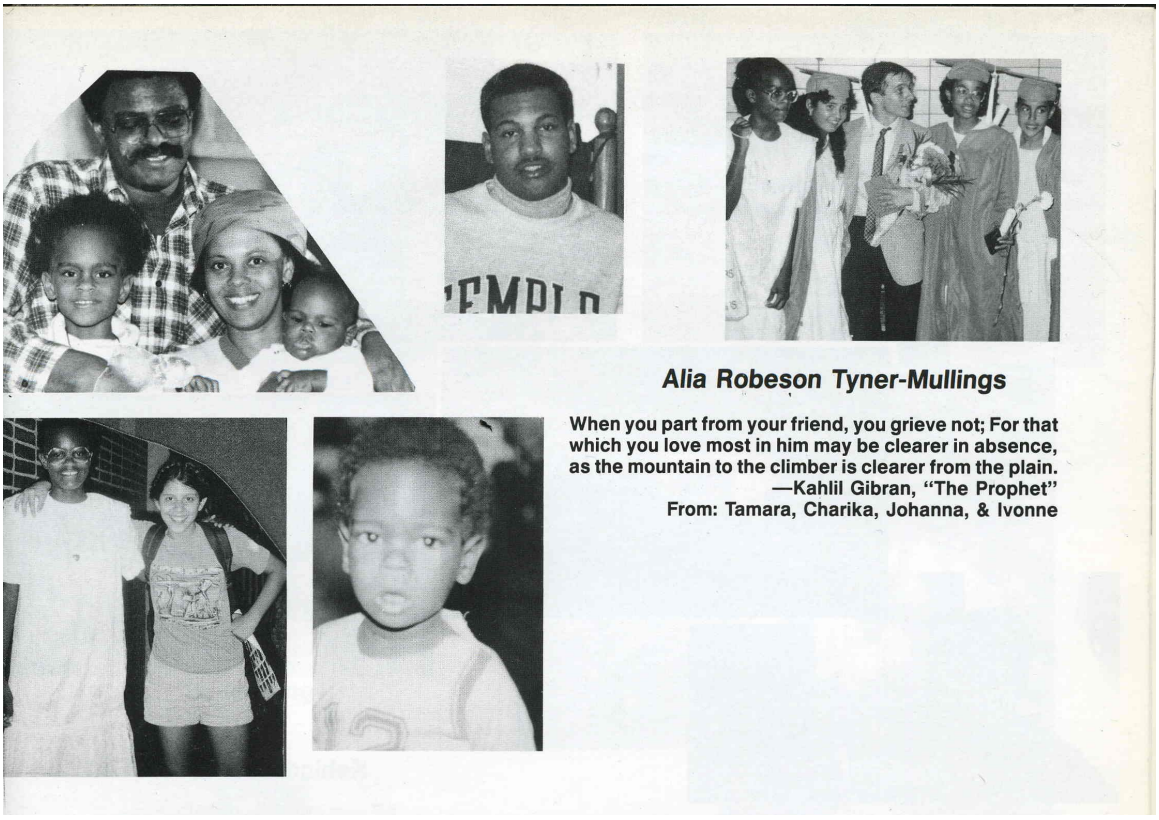
(E)vidence (What is the evidence? How do we know what we know?)

(S)peculation/Supposition (What if…? How else may it be considered?)

(S)ignificance (Who cares? What difference does it make?)

Appendix K: Sample Yearbook Pages

A Yearbook Half-Page (one student)



Alia Robeson Tyner-Mullings

When you part from your friend, you grieve not; For that which you love most in him may be clearer in absence, as the mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain.
—Kahlil Gibran, "The Prophet"
From: Tamara, Charika, Johanna, & Ivonne

Page 1 of a Two-page Yearbook Spread

(four students)

Page 2 of a Two-page Yearbook Spread

(four students)

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