



Opening a New District High School

District Leadership Forum

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Table of Contents

1) Executive Overview	4
Key Observations	4
2) New School Programs and Design	5
Motivations	5
Program Opportunities	5
Building Features	8
3) Students	9
Student Transitions	9
Engaging Community Before Opening	11
Cultivating Climate After Opening	12
4) Staff	17
Appointing New Principal	17
Hiring Teachers	18
Empowering Teachers	20
5) Research Methodology	22
Project Challenges	22
Project Sources	22
Research Parameters	23

1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Administrators at some profiled districts provide the same programming at the original and new high school, while administrators at other profiled districts provide varied offerings. Administrators at **District A**, **District B**, **District C**, and **District E** offer consistent programming at the new and original schools, citing equity in learning opportunities as their rationale. In contrast, administrators at **District D** and **District F** offer distinct Academies (i.e., industry-relevant, career-focused pathways) and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs at the two schools, respectively. Administrators at District F reason that by allowing all students access to programs at the two schools (i.e., through bus transportation), administrators provide expanded learning opportunities.

Administrators at profiled districts pursued innovative building design for the new high school to build momentum for the school opening. For the new high school's design, administrators at **District E** included open collaboration areas in the academic wings, movable walls between some classrooms, and flexible seating options. Contacts note that these design elements encourage creativity in pedagogy (e.g., co-teaching) and interdisciplinary learning opportunities. Contacts at District E and **District F** emphasize that building innovations help create excitement for new high schools. To maintain equity between the new and original schools, administrators at District F intentionally planned for major renovations at the original school to coincide with the opening of the new school.

Establish a community-wide redistricting committee to determine student placement at the new high school and garner buy-in for new attendance boundaries. Administrators at **District C**, **District E**, and **District F** established a redistricting committee at least one year in advance of the new school's opening. The committee comprised district leaders and other community stakeholders (e.g., parents, staff, director of transportation). The committees at all three profiled districts partnered with external consultants to draw new school attendance boundaries. By establishing a community-led process to determine redistricting, administrators promote stakeholder buy-in for new district lines.

Hire the new high school principal at least one year in advance of the opening to establish a strong, positive school culture. Given typical resistance among students who must transition from the original to new high school, the principal should focus on building the school community in advance of its opening. By doing so, the principal can build rapport with students and establish a positive school culture. For example, at **District E**, the new principal attended extracurricular activities (e.g., athletics, marching band) to meet and support students who would be attending the new school the following year. The principal also collaborated with students to decide the mascot and school colors and promote the school motto. In addition to branding and building a sense of community with stakeholders, a principal typically serves as a liaison to the construction company, purchases building furniture and equipment, and hires staff.

2) New School Programs and Design

Motivations

Profiled Districts Opened New High Schools in Response to Growing Student Enrollment

All profiled districts added a new comprehensive high school between Fall 2013 and 2019, except for **District C** (which will open its new high school in 2021). Contacts at profiled districts cite expanding student enrollment as the motivation for opening a new school.

Overview of New High School Opening at Profiled Districts

District	Year of Opening New High School	N th Comprehensive High School in District
District A	2013	Second
District B	2017	Third
District D	2017	Fifth
District E	2018	Fourth
District F	2019	Second
District C	2021	Fourth

Program Opportunities

Most Profiled Districts Establish Same Program Offerings Between the Original and New High Schools

Administrators at **District A**, **District B**, **District C**, and **District E** prioritize consistency in program offerings at the new school to ensure equity in learning opportunities. For example, at District E, all four high schools reflect each other programmatically, including providing the same advanced placement (AP) classes and athletics opportunities.

At District B, parents specifically requested that the two schools maintain the same programs, staffing ratios, and facilities, as part of the community-wide bond approval process. Similarly, at District A, the school board mandated that administrators create equal programming. In addition, contacts at District E point to potentially disparate enrollment at themed high schools as part of administrators' rationale to offer the same program opportunities at the new high school.

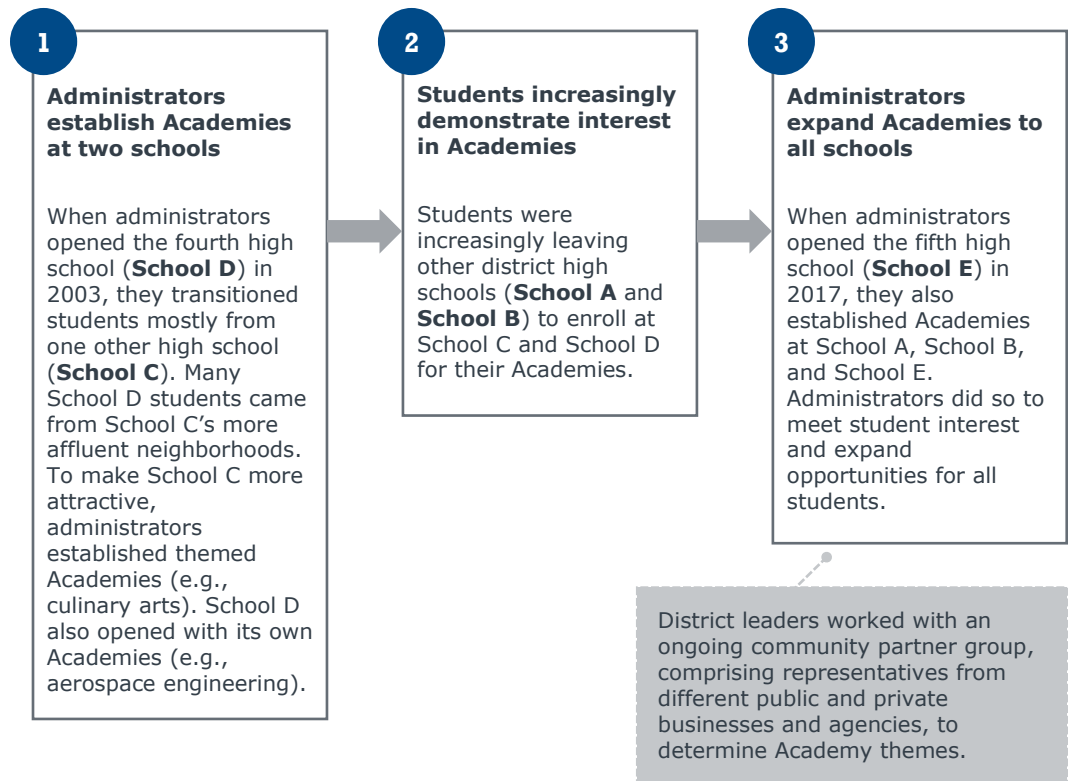
District D and District F Offer Varied Programs at the Original and New High Schools to Expand Opportunities for All Students

Administrators at **District D** and **District F** established different Academy (i.e., industry-relevant, career-focused pathways) and Career Technical Education (CTE) program offerings (respectively) at the original and new high schools to provide more opportunities for all students. Administrators at both profiled districts maintain the same core curriculum and graduation requirements at the two schools.

Administrators at District D ensure equity of learning opportunities by allowing incoming ninth grade students to apply for an Academy at any of the five high schools. If accepted, the student enrolls in that school full-time (regardless of if it is

their home school of attendance). A quarter of students at the district are currently enrolled in an Academy.

Process of Establishing Equity in Learning Opportunities Through Providing Academy Programs at *District D*



When determining CTE program offerings at the original and new high schools, administrators at District F prioritized financial sustainability (i.e., offering a high-cost program at only one school versus offering identical high-cost programs at both schools), staffing of teachers for specialty areas (i.e., the challenge of recruiting teachers for specific pathways), and course demand. In addition, contacts note that AP course offerings may differ at both schools each year, contingent on student enrollment (i.e., if enrollment is high enough to justify full AP sections at both schools).

Examples of CTE Pathway Decisions at *District F*



Agriculture

The original high school had partnered with the local community to establish a greenhouse for students studying in the Agriculture pathway. Instead of replicating a greenhouse at the new high school, administrators decided to offer introductory Agriculture classes at the new high school and keep advanced Agriculture classes (involving the greenhouse) at the original high school.



Woodshop and Industrial Arts

The original high school contained both the Woodshop and Industrial Arts programs. Due to the high cost associated with both programs, administrators chose to distribute the two programs across the schools. They kept Industrial Arts at the original high school and moved Woodshop to the new high school.

For more information on bus transportation and teleconferencing to allow students access to courses at other schools in the district, review pages 20-21 of EAB's brief [Expanding Access to Dual Enrollment](#).

Administrators at **District F** provide bus transportation so that students can access CTE courses at both schools—ultimately ensuring equity in learning opportunities. The high school principals and transportation director worked together to determine bus transportation schedules for students before school and during lunchtime. Administrators aligned the two schools' schedules (i.e., four, 90-minute blocks per day) to minimize lost instructional time.

Consider Challenges of Sharing Students Between Schools

While only **District F** shares students between the new and original high schools, **District A**, **District B**, and **District C** allow students to travel to off-site community college or CTE classes. However, contacts at several profiled districts generally recommend against sharing students between the two high schools. Contacts point to challenges of aligning schedules, losing instructional time, and covering the high cost of transportation. In addition, if administrators allow students to provide their own transportation, administrators may face resulting discipline issues.

Some Profiled Districts Use Innovative Building Design to Create Momentum for the New High School

Administrators at some profiled districts selected progressive building designs for the new high schools to create momentum for the school. For example, administrators at **District E** and **District F** added specific building design elements for the new high school to encourage creativity in pedagogy (e.g., co-teaching) and interdisciplinary learning opportunities. Administrators at District F consulted with another school district in the state that had made a similar transition and visited successful businesses (e.g., Google, IDEO) to model learning spaces after progressive workplaces.

New School Building Design Features at Profiled Districts

Administrators at **District D** modeled the new high school after a college campus.

For more information on innovative learning space design, review EAB's brief [Student-Centered Classroom Design and Technology](#).



Innovative Learning Spaces

- **District C, District D, and District E** established flexible learning spaces (e.g., blended classrooms, movable classroom walls, conference rooms, open collaboration areas).
- District C and District E selected flexible classroom seating options (e.g., tables and chairs students can move to form groups, standing desk, fidget bar).
- District E updated classroom technology. Instead of projectors and interactive white boards, administrators implemented interactive TVs in classrooms.



Security

- District E designed a security vestibule to ensure one single point of building entry while school is in session.
- District C will increase security measures by installing badge access for building entry.



Additional Features

- District D designed a "student union," which includes a connected cafeteria, learning commons, library, and a wide and deep staircase where students can sit.
- District E established a designated events space on the second floor of the library.
- District E built a wider central staircase and larger hallways to prevent student bottlenecks.

Administrators at some profiled districts simultaneously planned renovations to original high schools to promote equity. For example, administrators at District E plan to incorporate similar innovations (e.g., security vestibule, collaborative spaces) at the other district high schools in an upcoming bond proposal. At **District B**, administrators also planned for renovations at the two other high schools in the district (e.g., new gym, cafeteria, HVAC system) while building the new high school.

Similarly, administrators at District F intentionally scheduled major renovations at the original high school to coincide with the opening of the new high school. Administrators also held an open house at the original high school once renovations were complete to celebrate the changes.

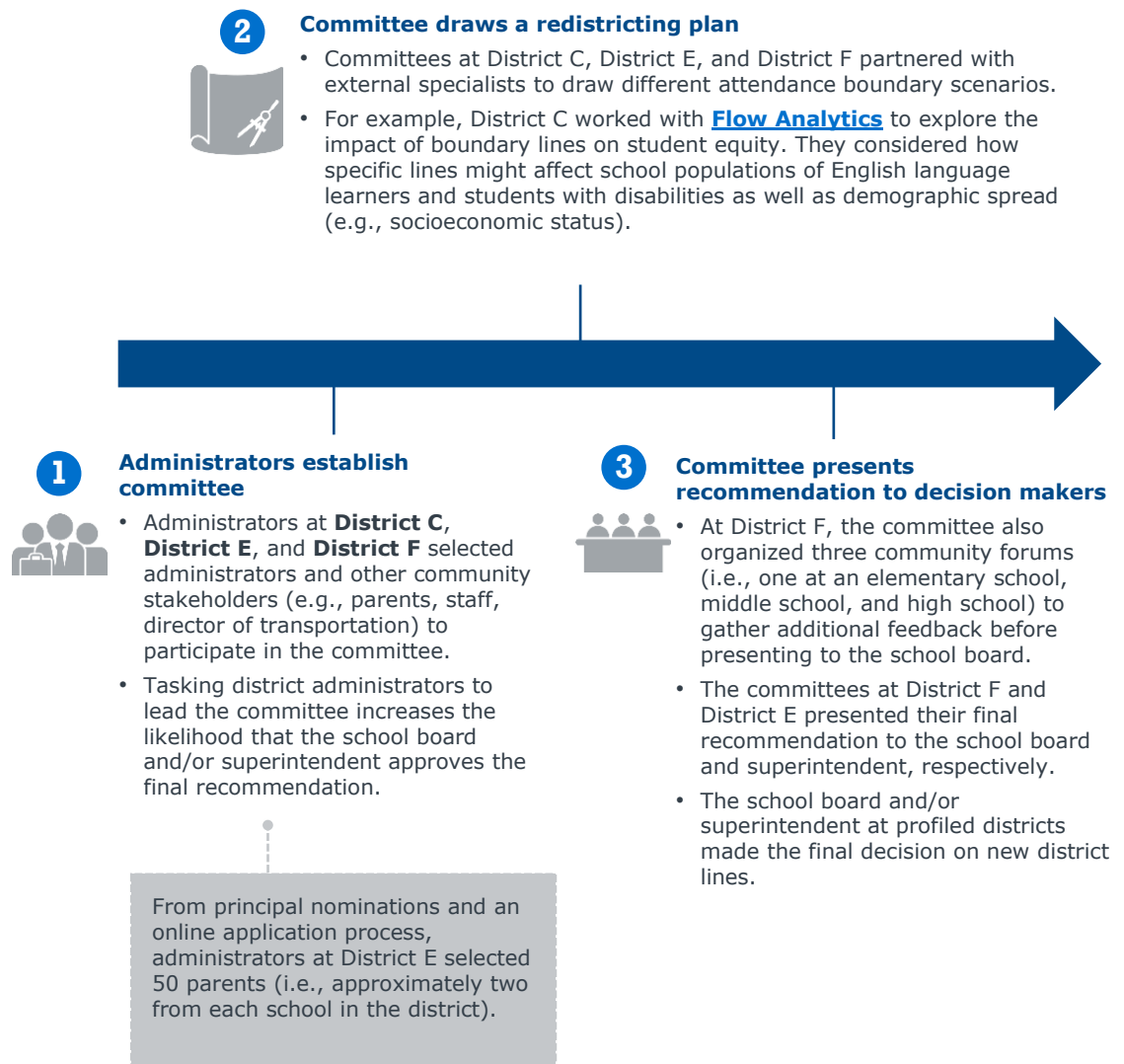
3) Students

Student Transitions

Implement a Community-Wide Redistricting Committee to Determine Student Placement at the New High School

By involving the community in drawing new district boundaries and feeder patterns, administrators demonstrate a commitment to transparency and stakeholder feedback. This ultimately helps build trust and garner community buy-in for new district lines. Administrators at **District C**, **District E**, and **District F** established redistricting committees at least one year in advance of the new schools' opening.

Redistricting Committee Processes at Profiled Districts



Consider Tradeoffs When Choosing Which Initial Grades to Transition to the New High School

Administrators at profiled districts varied in their approach to choosing which grades to transition to the new high school in the first year. For example, administrators at **District E** opened the new school with freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, and gave seniors the option to stay at the original high school. Administrators at **District B**, **District C**, and **District D** mandated that freshmen and sophomores start at the new school, and gave both juniors and seniors the option to stay. However, due to subsequently low senior enrollment numbers at the new school (i.e., few seniors chose to attend the new school), administrators at District D decided to keep all seniors at the original school during the first year to minimize costs (i.e., costs of staffing and providing advanced courses for seniors).

Comparison of Three Approaches to Grade Placement in the First Year at the New School

Initial Grades	Advantages	Disadvantages
Scenario 1: Administrators require freshmen and sophomores to attend the new school.	- Freshmen and sophomores, who have only spent a maximum of one year at the original school, tend to be more willing to move to a new school. - With the combination of a smaller school size and absence of upperclassmen in the first year, the new school offers less competitive athletics programs. This may incentivize freshmen and sophomores, who have a better opportunity to participate in junior varsity and varsity sports. - Administrators save costs by foregoing staffing and advanced courses for juniors and seniors during the first year.	- Lack of upperclassmen leadership may lead to challenges with establishing a strong culture and climate. - Two years of likely subpar athletic competition may harm the long-term success of athletics programs.
Scenario 2: Administrators require freshmen , sophomores , and juniors to attend the new school. Alternatively, administrators may give juniors the choice to remain at the original school.	- By including juniors in the first year, administrators ensure some upperclassmen leadership, which may help build school culture and traditions. - Administrators save costs by foregoing staffing and advanced courses for seniors at the new high school.	- During the first year, administrators offer fewer advanced courses—limiting opportunities for some juniors. - Administrators may receive strong pushback from juniors, who have spent two years at the original school.
Scenario 3: Administrators require freshmen , sophomores , juniors , and seniors to attend the new school.	Strong upperclassmen leaders can help pioneer school culture and traditions and serve as a role model for freshmen and sophomores.	Administrators may receive strong pushback from juniors and seniors, who do not want to leave the original school.

Anticipate and Address Student and Parent Resistance to Attending the New School

Contacts at several profiled districts note that when administrators open a new high school, most students, especially juniors and seniors, prefer to stay at the original school. For example, at **District B**, administrators initially mandated that all students assigned to the new school enroll in that school. However, administrators received significant pushback from juniors and seniors. Most wanted to stay at the original school for its strong academic and successful athletic programs, in addition to their established connection to the school. In response, the school board allowed juniors and seniors the option to stay at the original school.

Administrators at **District A**, **District E**, and **District F** identified strategies to mitigate student and parent resistance to attending the new school, prior to its opening.

Approaches to Mitigate Initial Student and Parent Resistance to Moving to the New School



Initial Student and Parent Resistance

Lack of equity

Students and parents are concerned about equity in learning opportunities between the original and new high school.

Loyalty to original school

Parents feel strong loyalty to the original school (e.g., because they themselves attended the school or have older children who attended) and want their children to stay at that school.

Compromised athletics opportunities

Student athletes, who are assigned to the new school for the following year, worry that coaches will decrease their playing time at the original school (before the new school's opening).



Approach

Demonstrate historical and current outcomes data to assure equity in learning opportunities.

Administrators at **District D** shared consistent academic and behavioral data (e.g., ACT scores, graduation rates, attendance rates) across the four existing high schools to demonstrate equity in learning opportunities. Administrators assured families that they would replicate equitable learning opportunities at the new high school.

Illustrate the need for a new school.

At **District F**, administrators led community members on tours of the original school to observe overcrowded learning spaces. They demonstrated why the district needed to open a new school and emphasized expanded program opportunities for all students.

Ensure coaches maintain equity in making team decisions.

Administrators at **District E** specifically prohibited coaches from basing playing time or recruitment decisions on a student's school placement for the following year.

Students, particularly upperclassmen who are more likely to have stronger ties to the original school, may apply for intradistrict transfer to remain at the original school. At **District E**, 120 juniors who were assigned to the new school requested to stay at the

original school. In response, administrators clearly communicated the intradistrict transfer policy, which states that a student automatically establishes their athletic eligibility at their assigned school of attendance. Unless the student is moved by the district (e.g., as a result of redistricting), the student loses one year of athletic eligibility when they move to another school. As administrators predicted, clarifying this stipulation presented a strong disincentive for juniors to remain at the original school. 80-90 juniors (i.e., approximately 75 percent of the original 120) chose to move to the new school.



Some Profiled Districts Granted Exceptions to Siblings Initially Assigned to Attend the New School

Administrators at multiple profiled districts allowed exceptions for some sibling pairs who were originally assigned to the new school. For example, at **District E**, contacts note the specific case of a senior/junior sibling pair that lives in the attendance zone for the new high school. If the senior chose to stay at the original school (all seniors were given the choice to do so), administrators also allowed the junior sibling to remain. Similarly, at **District F**, where all juniors and seniors could choose to stay at the original school, younger siblings (i.e., sophomores and freshmen) could also remain at the original school. Contacts cite convenience of transportation as the motivation behind this decision.

Cultivating Climate After Opening

***District B* Implemented Tier I PBIS to Establish Strong Climate at the New High School**

Contacts at **District B** emphasize the unexpected, significant challenge of creating a positive culture and climate at any school in advance of occupying that space. Although the principal worked closely with teacher leaders on core values during the summer prior to the new school's opening, the school community struggled to establish positive climate during the first year.

School Climate Challenges at the New High School in *District B*

1

Lack of strong upperclassmen leadership in sports, student clubs, and the larger community

After redrawing district lines, administrators gave juniors and seniors a choice to stay at the original school for the first year. Only about 37 percent of eligible juniors and 15 percent of eligible seniors chose to attend the new school. Also, many who did attend the new had experienced academic and/or social challenges at the original school (e.g., lack of participation in extracurriculars).

2

Disproportionate enrollment of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and presence of racial tension

When reconfiguring school attendance zones, the community had intentionally sought a balance of socioeconomic backgrounds of students at the new school.

- However, administrators mandated that students assigned to the new school, who also needed school-provided transportation, attend the new school. As an unintentional result, juniors and seniors from low socioeconomic backgrounds disproportionately enrolled at the new school.
- The new school drew some of its enrollment from neighborhoods with a higher proportion of African American students. This meant that some African American students had to drive through other attendance zones to attend the new school. Contacts report that many of these students subsequently felt like they were pulled out of their original communities to attend the new school. African American students were also suspended disproportionately compared to their white peers.

3

Different schools of attendance prior to new school

Students came from many different schools to attend the new school, which magnified the difficulty of creating a unified sense of belonging.

4

High number of student suspensions

The first-year suspension of the new school was significantly higher than at the other two high schools in the district. Contacts note the connection between high rate of student incidences and lack of student belonging and community.

Faced with the above challenges, administrators chose to implement Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) to establish positive behavioral expectations and ultimately improve the school climate. The new high school partnered with a local educational services agency and university to implement PBIS during the second year of the new high school's existence.

PBIS Implementation at New High School in *District B*



All teachers attended a **1.5-day PBIS training**. Administrators, teachers, and students worked with representatives from the local agency and university to determine the school's core values.



Administrators created **teacher-led PBIS committees** on:

- Branding (e.g., promoting core values),
- Lessons (e.g., teaching core values),
- Positive reinforcement (e.g., rewarding demonstrations of core values),
- Discipline (e.g., creating a flowchart of consequences to ensure consistency in expectations for students).

The teacher committees met twice a week during the first three weeks of school. All teachers dedicated two, 40-minute homeroom periods to introducing students to the school's core values.

Sample Lessons Plans to Reinforce Core Values at the New High School in *District B*

Introduction to PBIS, Belonging and Ownership

- The teacher introduces students to PBIS through a video featuring the principal and two seniors.
- The teacher walks students through "Belonging" and "Ownership." For each core value, students copy down the expectations of the principle, watch a short video (featuring current students) and note examples of the principle, and debrief as a group afterwards.

For **Ownership**, the video presents a graduation speech from one of the first graduates of the high school. The senior speaks about how he overcame challenges in school and how he takes ownership of his future. After the video, the teacher introduces students to the concept of a growth mindset to demonstrate that students have agency in their success at school.

For **Belonging**, the video on tardiness profiles the four-minute journey of one student transitioning from one class to the next. He stops at his locker to pick up class materials, at the bathroom, greets peers and teachers along the way, and successfully makes it in time for his next class on the other side of the building. After the video, the teacher introduces the variety of student clubs at the high school (i.e., description, leadership, time and place of meeting) and encourages students to attend the upcoming club fair.

District B Reports Significant, Positive Impact of PBIS Implementation on Student and Staff Outcomes

For more information on PBIS, review **pages 27-36** EAB's study [**A Systemic Approach to Managing Behavioral Disruptions in Early Grades.**](#)

Contacts at **District B** highlight the positive value of PBIS for both students and teachers.

PBIS Outcomes at *District B's* New High School



Students

- Contacts report a **significant decrease in student suspensions** across the second year at the new school. Contacts attribute better behavior to a stronger sense of community and belonging among students.
- When teachers and administrators involve students in the PBIS process, **students feel empowered to serve as stewards of the school culture**. For example, some students participated in specific, teacher-led committees (e.g., branding). The principal also met with multiple student focus groups (that represented a diversity of backgrounds and experiences) to gather their perspectives on school climate and their recommendations for improvement. Contacts report that these students subsequently spread the message to their peers that administrators valued student voice.



Teachers

- Contacts report that when teachers actively shape the climate at the school, **teachers feel invested in the community**. Contacts highlight that PBIS implementation **cultivated strong teacher collaboration**.
- At the end of the first year, the principal conducted one-on-one interviews with teachers to gather challenges and suggestions for improvement. The principal worked with the teacher-led instructional leadership team to implement those recommendations in the second year. During the second year, the principal again conducted one-on-one interviews with all teachers to solicit their feedback. This strategy ensures ongoing improvements in school climate. By elevating teacher voice, the principal **promotes trust between teachers and administrators**.

In this upcoming year, teachers will review core values with all students through newly designed lessons. Administrators plan to implement multi-tiered interventions for specific students who need the most support, to continue strengthening school climate for all students.

Regularly Celebrate Examples of Positive Behavior that Contribute to a Successful School Climate

By acknowledging and awarding exemplary behavior from both students and staff, administrators positively reinforce core values and ultimately ensure the ongoing success of culture-building initiatives at the new school.

Students and Staff Honor Exemplary Behavior at *District B*



**Student
Recognition**

"Positive Postcards"

- Staff members fill out postcards to celebrate examples of positive student behavior (as related to school's core values) and mail the postcards home to students and families.
- Parents and guardians write and send postcards to their children during parent conferences and back-to-school night.



**Teacher
Recognition**

Peer-nominated teacher awards

- Teachers nominate each other for positively contributing to the school community. A recognized teacher receives a certificate with a description of why they were nominated, and a school-themed coaster made by students.

Student-nominated teacher awards

- Administrators or colleagues present a certificate to a recognized teacher, in front of their students. The teacher also receives a small token of appreciation (e.g., gift card to local businesses, school supplies, candy, snacks).

4) Staff

Appointing New Principal

Contacts at **District A** recommend also hiring a communications director to create and execute a communications plan, monitor different channels (e.g., website, Facebook), and answer questions from students, parents, staff, and community members.

Hire the New Principal At Least One Year in Advance to Manage Building Construction and Hiring Process

Administrators at all profiled districts hired the new high school's principal at least one year in advance of the school's opening. Contacts at multiple profiled districts advise against hiring a principal in the middle of any school year, citing disruption to their respective districts.

Notably, administrators at **District F** appointed the new principal two years in advance, so that the principal could be more involved with the building construction process. Administrators at **District D** hired not only a principal but also an assistant principal one year in advance. The assistant principal primarily handled the building construction process, while the principal focused on assembling staff, athletics, and activities. Administrators at **District C** plan to hire a school secretary along with the new principal.

A new principal typically serves as a liaison to the construction company, purchases building furniture and equipment, and hires staff. In addition, the new principals at profiled districts proactively designed initiatives to improve the new school's culture. By hiring the new principal one year in advance, administrators ensure that the principal has time to fulfill these responsibilities.

Task the Principal to Build Buy-in and Cultivate a Positive Culture for the New School

Given typical resistance among students who must transition from the original to new high school, contacts at profiled districts recommend that the principal implement initiatives to celebrate the new school in advance of its opening. By doing so, the principal can proactively establish a positive and engaging school culture.

Strategies Principals Use to Proactively Build Community at the New School



Build Rapport with Students and Teachers

- At **District E**, the principal attended extracurricular activities (e.g., athletics, marching band) to support students who would be attending the new school the following year.
- The principal also gifted each teacher a brick with the new school's commemorative coin attached, to symbolize everyone collectively building the foundation of the school. The principal also held all-staff social events for newly hired teachers and coaches.
- The principals at both District E and **District B** involved teachers in classroom design decisions (e.g., furniture).



Organize Tours of the New School

- The principal at District E invited community members to tour the new school in advance of its opening. Over 4,000 community members attended.



Collaborate with the Community on School Branding and Promote School Spirit

- The principal at District E solicited input from students on the mascot and school colors, and prominently promoted the school motto (e.g., in person, via social media) to build school spirit. The principal also sold new school gear at local establishments (e.g., pizza shops).
- The principal at District B worked with students to create the new school's crest. The band teacher composed the alma mater song.
- Administrators at **District D** ran a district-wide "pick the mascot" campaign for the new school, in which stakeholders from all schools could participate.
- Administrators at **District C** involved the community in selecting the name of the new school.

Hiring Teachers

Proactively Communicate to Teachers the Number of Necessary Internal Transfers and Honor Teacher Transfer Preference

When administrators redistribute students from one to two schools, they must also rebalance the teaching staff (i.e., transfer some teachers to the new school). Thus, administrators first open positions at the new school to teachers at the original school. For example, at **District E**, the original high school contained 2,100 students. When the new high school opened, the original school's enrollment dropped to 1,400. The new principal had to transfer approximately 30 percent of teachers from the original high school. Similarly, administrators at **District B** hired 60 percent of the teachers from the original school.

Contacts at **District D** recommend principals clearly communicate to teachers in advance how many internal transfers are needed. By doing so, administrators proactively build trust and transparency with teachers throughout the staff redistribution process.

In addition, administrators should honor teachers' first choice (i.e., no forced transfers) when possible, to ensure that teachers are dedicated to their assigned

school. Contacts at District E note that most, if not all, internal transfers resulted from voluntary requests. At **District A**, administrators honored more than 90 percent of teacher requests. Contacts note that the few exceptions represented unique circumstances (e.g., a spouse would be the teacher's supervisor, administrators needed a male or female physical education teacher for locker-room supervision).

Explain Differences in Building Expectations to Ensure Transferring Teachers Understand Requirements

By proactively explaining differences in building expectations at the new school, administrators can find the best fit for open positions at the school. For example, the administrators **District D** explained to teachers (that expressed interest in transferring to the new school) how flexible learning spaces (e.g., traditional classroom, blended learning lab, makerspace) at the new school might impact their teaching responsibilities. Administrators expect teachers to consistently navigate these various learning spaces. In the new school, teachers sign up for specific learning spaces in advance, based on their lesson plan. While teachers in some classes (e.g., band, foods, science) might have one fixed classroom, teachers in core classes, electives, and language classes might occupy three different types of learning spaces in a single week. Contacts note that a few teachers, upon learning that they would not have their own fixed classroom (e.g., no file cabinets, no decoration of classrooms), ultimately withdrew their applications.

Additional Teacher Recruiting Considerations at Profiled Districts



Selection of Teachers

- Administrators at **District F** granted both tenured and non-tenured teachers the eligibility to transfer to the new school. Administrators prioritized teacher fit over seniority.
- Contacts at multiple districts caution against intensely recruiting all the favorite teachers from one high school. Contacts at **District E** recommend that the two high school principals hold open conversations on teacher recruiting and collaborate closely to ensure balanced teaching teams at both schools.
- Contacts at **District C** will prioritize recruiting a diverse teaching force to reflect the diverse student body.

For more information on finding diverse teaching talent, see EAB's brief [Increasing Teacher Diversity](#).



Timing of Recruiting Process

- The principal at **District B** dedicated most of the spring semester prior to the new school's opening to hiring staff. Contacts recommend simultaneously screening external applicants for one department and interviewing external applicants for another department each week (i.e., instead of dedicating one week to only screening applicants and another week to only interviewing applicants) to maintain a sustainable workflow.
- The principal at **District E** waited until the end of the athletic season to hire coaches for the following year to avoid poaching coaches from their current teams during the middle of the season.



After Finalizing Teacher Placement at the Original and New Schools, *District A* Celebrated the Entire Teaching Community

At **District A**, administrators organized a celebratory event to communicate all teachers' final positions for the following year. In the style of a sports draft, administrators called up each teacher one by one to a stage, announced their position, and gave them a t-shirt. The front of the shirt featured the name of their assigned school. The wording on the back of the shirt indicated that the community was still one town. By doing so, administrators encourage pride for both schools in the community.

Empowering Teachers

Encourage Teachers to Contribute to Classroom and Overall Building Design at the New School

By incorporating teacher input into the design of the new school, administrators demonstrate that they value teachers' perspectives and empower teachers to take ownership of the new school. For example, administrators at **District E** involved teachers across all four high schools in building and classroom design decisions for the new school. Contacts at both **District B** and **District E** highlight that when teachers feel empowered to actively shape the new school, they become more invested in that school community (e.g., teachers are excited to transition to open positions at the new school).

For example, at **District E**, teachers originally suggested adding collaborative spaces and a specific events space in the library, both of which were ultimately incorporated into the construction of the new school. In addition, administrators collaborated closely with a committee of teachers that represented different content areas to determine classroom design. Once these learning spaces were built, the principal

solicited input from teachers on more specific design decisions, such as classroom furniture.



Consider Establishing a Multi-Functional Transition Committee of Various Stakeholders to Ease the Transition to a New School

Administrators at **District B** established a multi-functional transition committee (different from a redistricting committee) one year in advance of the new school's opening. Administrators selected parent representatives and staff from all high schools to participate in the committee. By doing so, administrators promote transparency, collaboration, and community-wide ownership of and pride in the new school. Subcommittees focused on different areas, such as academics, athletics, buildings, and grounds. For example, the academics subcommittee discussed AP course offerings for the first year at the new school (given small senior class). The principal attended subcommittee meetings to share decisions and gather input from stakeholders.

5) Research Methodology

Project Challenges

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- How did contact districts determine program opportunities at the new high school (i.e., in comparison with program opportunities at the original high school)?
- How did contact districts ensure and communicate equity in learning opportunities between the new and original high schools?
- What specific guidelines did contact districts use to determine student placement at the original and new high schools?
- Do contact districts share (or considered sharing) students between high school sites? If so, why do contact districts share students? How do contact districts accomplish this?
- Prior to construction of the new high school, which building decisions did contact districts make that they would recommend?
- Prior to construction of the new high school, which building decisions did contacts districts make that they would have done differently?
- How did contact districts determine staffing for the new high school?
- How did contact districts celebrate both schools in the larger community?
- How did contact districts engage students and families staying at the original high school?
- How did contact districts engage students and families starting at the new high school?
- How did contact districts respond to unforeseen challenges encountered during the transition to two high schools?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries (eab.com)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)
- Flow Analytics. Accessed August 26, 2019. <https://flow-analytics.com/>.

Research
Parameters

The Forum interviewed school and district-level administrators.

A Guide to Districts Profiled in this Brief

District	Location	Approximate Enrollment
District A	Midwest	11,600
District B	Midwest	14,300
District C	Pacific West	17,400
District D	Midwest	29,400
District E	Midwest	20,300
District F	Mountain West	6,000