

## **WRITING TO BE HEARD**

# **Building Respectful Communities**

## **Kensington students examine adult-student relationships in their new small schools**



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*A project of Research for Action in cooperation with Youth United for Change as part of the Learning from Philadelphia's School Reform research and public awareness initiative.*



**RESEARCH for ACTION**

**November 2006**

## Foreword

*Research for Action (RFA) has worked with student members of Youth United for Change (YUC) and Philadelphia Student Union (PSU) for the past two and half years. Over that time, these young people have committed themselves to learning social science research methods and conducted a study of their changing schools. I think you will find their reports compelling; they give voice to students' lived experience at their high schools.*

*The motivation of these young people to be youth researchers stems from their activist commitment to make their high schools better places for all students. As youth researchers, their research is intended to support the YUC and PSU small schools campaigns at Kensington, Olney, and West Philadelphia High Schools.*

*Some of the achievements of these youth researchers are their willingness to do the hard work of learning new skills and completing the entire research process, including creating outstanding research products. Throughout, the youth researchers have developed their presentation skills as they spoke about their work in a range of settings, including a public action for their small schools campaigns, presentations to Teach for America teachers, a panel discussion for Bryn Mawr College education students, and a seminar with RFA research staff and board.*

*During the first year of the project (December 2004–May 2005), the youth researchers learned the skills of participant-observation and taking fieldnotes, and keeping reflective journals. Their fieldnotes and journals became the data for their first product, a graphic road map that illustrated the course of their small schools campaigns that year (see Appendix A). The youth researchers then attended the RFA Youth in Action summer research camp where they learned how to conduct interviews, focus groups and surveys, as well as do document searches using the internet. In the second year of the project, the youth researchers applied their new research skills to questions they posed about their changing schools. From September 2005 to May 2006, they read about small schools (see the Bibliography) and they gathered data (see Appendix B for the research instruments that guided their data collection). In addition, they kept reflec-*

*tive journals. In August 2006 the youth researchers attended an RFA Writing to be Heard Institute, where they worked as an interpretive community, analyzing their data individually, in school teams and across teams, and turning their research into written products. Fall 2006 was devoted to revision, and finalizing their reports.*

*RFA staff served as guides, teachers and mentors throughout this project. Marsha Pincus, a Philadelphia Writing Project Teacher-Consultant and high school English teacher, helped design and lead the Writing to be Heard summer institute. The principals of the three new small Kensington schools, Olney 705 and West Philadelphia welcomed the students as researchers. The teachers at the Kensington small schools and Olney 705 were generous in their support of the data collection. Parents of PSU members openly shared their experiences and beliefs with the youth researchers. The adult chapter organizers worked with the youth researchers and RFA to determine important audiences for the youth research and to help formulate recommendations based upon the research findings.*

*As school reformers, there is much to learn from young people about their learning environments. We believe these reports demonstrate the powerful contributions young people can make to their high school communities when they engage in rigorous and systematic investigations of their schools and are surrounded by a community of caring and concerned adults committed to urban youth and school improvement. The findings in these reports are the conclusions of the youth researchers themselves. They are now fully ready for the next phase of their work-- sharing their research findings with a wide range of audiences concerned about the future of urban public high schools. We welcome these youth researchers to the broader research community concerned with social justice and high school transformation.*

*– Eva Gold, Kristine Lewis, Gretchen Suess,  
Cheryl Jones-Walker, Sonia Rosen*

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Research for Action Youth Researcher WRITING TO BE HEARD Report Series:

- *Building Respectful Communities—Kensington Students Examine Adult-Student Relationships in their New Small Schools*
  - *What Olney Teachers Say about Their Students and School*
- *Parents Speak Up and Out About Parent Participation in Urban Public High Schools*

This project was made possible through the generous support of the Samuel S. Fels Fund, the Edward W. Hazen Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Philadelphia Foundation, and the Surdna Foundation.  
The views expressed within are solely those of the authors.

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## **SCHOOL BACKGROUND**

**K**ensington High School is located in the Kensington area of Philadelphia on the corner of Cumberland and Ambler Streets. Kensington was built in 1912 and it is a red brick four floor structure. Originally Kensington was an all girls high school. It went co-ed in the late 1970s. An annex was built in 2000 because the main building was overcrowded. In addition a part of the annex has been devoted to a childcare and kindergarten center which was funded by a five year grant.

Kensington is a neighborhood high school. Formerly the community was made up of working-class white families who were employed by the factories in the area. As the factories declined, most white families migrated to the Northeast section of the city and African American, Latino and more recently Asian families moved into the neighborhood.

After a successful campaign led by Youth United for Change, Kensington High School was broken up into three small schools, with a fourth to be built. The three small schools that make up the current Kensington High School are Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) and International Business, Finance and Entrepreneurship (Business) which are housed in the main building and Culinary Arts, which is housed in the Annex. CAPA shares the main building with Business. A wall was erected in 2005 to physically separate Business from CAPA. CAPA's side of the building includes the gym and the auditorium. Business is housed in a smaller part of the building. At the end of 2004-2005, all Kensington students were able to select which small school to attend. In 2005-2006, incoming 9th grades were housed in any of the three small schools where they were taught the core-curriculum. At the end of the year, the 9th graders were able to select the small school in which they were going to continue their education.

Kensington Business<sup>1</sup> is the largest small school in Kensington High School, with 455 students. Beginning in the 10th grade, students study subjects relating to business such as financial planning, accounting and entrepreneurship. In 2005-2006, the student body was 31.6% African American, 16.3% white, 5.1% Asian, 46.4% Latino and .7% other. The students mostly come from low-income families and 57 of the 455 students are eligible for ESL services.

Kensington Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) enrollment is 394 students. CAPA offers courses in Dance, Visual Arts, Theatre, Vocal & Instrumental Music in addition to the academic course. In 2005-06, these courses were offered to students in grades 10-12. The student body of CAPA is: 34.3% African American, 15% white, 2.3% Asian, 47.7% Latino and .8% other. Also 34 of the 394 students are receiving ESOL services.

Kensington Culinary Arts is the smallest school and is located at Coral and Emerald Streets in the Annex built in 2000. In 2005- 06 Culinary had 328 students. Students in Culinary Arts take courses to prepare them for careers in the restaurant and hospitality fields. In addition to academic courses, 10th-12th grade students take courses in party and event planning , get certified in sanitation and compete in C-CAP competitions. The student body is 36% African American, 19.2% white, 1.5% Asian, 42.7% Latinos, and 6% other. Twenty-seven of the 328 students are in ESL programs.

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<sup>1</sup> Information about the schools comes from: the School District of Philadelphia School Profiles, 2005-2006.

## THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND DATA COLLECTION

The question that concerned us as youth researchers was about the relationships between adults and students in all three of our new small schools. Some of us experienced a lack of respect from our teachers and other adults in the school. We felt we were not being treated like young adults. Some of us also observed that students were not always acting like young adults either. In our conversations, we discussed the different ways adults and students were communicating with each other. We knew from the reading we did about small schools and the visits we had made

*We felt we were not being treated like young adults.*

to small schools that relationships in new small schools were supposed to be trusting and respectful. We also knew from the reading we did that strong student-teacher relationships were supposed to lead to stronger learning.

We decided it was important to learn about adult-student relationships in our new small schools. To learn about student-adult relationships we would conduct interviews, informal conversations, and observations. We conducted this research for three months in Spring of 2006. In preparation, students learned research methods in a research camp sponsored by Research for Action. Some researchers spent one Saturday a month exploring small schools literature and developing protocols—questions we wanted to ask and what to look for when we did observations-- for their research. The students also had one-on-one mentors from Research for Action to support their research. Before beginning to do the research, we met with the principals from each of our schools, and in some cases with the teachers too. We also spent a week in the summer in an intensive institute analyzing the data we had collected, writing the reports, and preparing presentations for outside audiences.

We conducted our research in all three small schools where we looked at classrooms (academic, electives and advisory) hallways, lunchroom, school entry and the main office.<sup>2</sup> We conducted this research 1) to improve teaching and learning in our small schools, 2) to see how small schools were doing at Kensington, 3) to banish the negative reputation of our school, 4) to improve student-teacher relationships 5) to address equity in education in all schools, and 6) to allow students' wishes to be heard.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### ASHLEY HATCH

Teachers serve as guides to their students to point them towards opportunities for success. How can this happen if teachers don't know their students well? Good teachers use strategies to build strong, positive, and respectful relationships with their students both to teach the lesson, and enable them to learn about their students. I observed Ms. Shaffer,<sup>3</sup> a first year teacher, who is known as a great teacher, focusing on the strategies she used in her classroom.

Ms. Shaffer's open discussions keep the attention of students, and let students give their opinions. This gives Ms. Shaffer a way to learn more about the students' points of view. When students enter Ms. Shaffer's

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<sup>2</sup> This report looks at adult-student relationships across the three new small Kensington schools. We did not do separate reports for each school because we found that the issues in all three schools were very similar.

<sup>3</sup> The names of all teachers, other adults, and students have been changed in this report.



room she always greets them, and often gives them a hug. This shows she recognizes them, and makes them feel welcome. She often gives the students the option on how to learn their lesson for the day. This is important because the teacher and student relationships impact the structure in the classroom. An open structure gives the teacher a chance to learn more about her students through the lessons.

Good teachers use strategies to build a good community. Teachers must build a small community in a classroom because it will be a better learning environment. In Ms. Shaffer's class, I observed a student ask her, "Why do you ask us how we want to do things? Just do it your way." Ms. Shaffer replied, "No, there is not just one way, and that's the polite [thing to do]." In the open discussions, students were comfortable with talking about their opinions with the teacher, and other students. They spoke their minds! She created a safe space for them to share. This is important because a safer, comfortable place makes it easier for students to communicate, and learn from each other as a small community.

These different strategies that build community also help individual students. Teachers need to use different strategies to help different individuals to understand the lesson, or topic. Ms. Shaffer's lesson plan started off with the students reading out loud. When a student misunderstood what the teacher was talking about, she rephrased it for the student. Ms. Shaffer also used a strategy where she was speaking as though she was the character out of the story so students could see different people's points of views. She also used her lesson plan to learn about each individual while they were involved with the open discussion, so she could learn which strategies to use for different individuals. Students learn in different ways and at different paces; that's why it's important for teachers to use different strategies for the lesson to reach all students.

Teachers and students are both responsible for creating the environment that we want for our small schools. Are students capable of taking on this responsibility? Through my research I realized that students are capable of taking the responsibility, but they have to sometimes be reminded. They have to be willing too. In Ms. Shaffer's class while she was reading out loud and having open discussions about the lesson, I observed a few students who were having a side discussion that wasn't about the lesson. The teacher addressed them, and then they took the responsibility to apologize for interrupting the lesson. Ms. Shaffer also addressed a student about her responsibility for leaving early. I observed a student giving Ms. Shaffer an early dismissal form to sign. Ms. Shaffer had told her there was a test the next day and reminded her that she needed to study. Ms. Shaffer reminded the student to study but it was the student's responsibility and choice to do so. Students must also take on responsibility to get their rest at home before school starts. In my research, I noticed during the whole class lesson and class discussions no students had their heads down, or were sleeping. Every student was focused! Students are capable of taking the responsibility for their own learning, and for a positive learning community, if the teacher communicates her expectations clearly, and firmly.

#### **RAHDIA ROBINSON**

Why is teacher- student communication important? When teachers do not have communications strategies, the class environment will be uncomfortable. When students are uncomfortable, there's no learning. Teachers learn how to teach as parents learn how to be new parents. Parents learn how to be new parents by listening, observing and responding to their children's needs. Ms. Schaffer is a new teacher but she knows communication is the key to getting her students focused. Despite the fact that she's a new teacher, Ms. Schaffer has strategies that other teachers can learn from. On the other hand, Mr. Rob is also a new teacher. He has to learn to respect the fact that he is a

teacher. When Mr. Rob communicates in a joking way, students don't take him seriously. Furthermore, Mr. Rob needs to watch his reactions to students because it reflects on him as a teacher.

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Ms. Shaffer, a teacher I observed for my research had many strategies for teaching her class. Except for lecturing at times during class, she got her students involved in class discussion groups. Ms. Schaffer also gave her students options for reading out loud or her reading to her students. That made the students feel relaxed and not pressured. It was also a polite way of letting her students know she cares. Once teachers have good communication with their students, teacher-student relationships will improve. Together they will be able to build a community in the classroom. Teachers and students would be able to communicate with each other about things that happen outside the classroom. This would make them more open with each other and students wouldn't feel uncomfortable or too shy to participate in the classroom activities.

Sometimes teachers can make students feel too comfortable. Mr. Rob is also a new teacher but he is struggling to find strategies to communicate with his students. Just like parents, teachers are learning on the job, and some are more effective than others. Mr. Rob is a first year teacher who may need time to develop strategies to communicate well with students. In Mr. Rob's class, students can be themselves. There is a very relaxed atmosphere. This can be tricky. Through Mr. Rob's communication style, students feel as though they are talking to a student, not a teacher. This distracts the students from learning. Mr. Rob should not talk or joke like students. Students do not know if he is joking or being serious. Through his language, students do not know whether to work hard or not.

For example, in a conversation I observed in homeroom, Mr. Rob and the students were talking about rappers and Frank

Sinatra. Mr. Rob said, “Frank Sinatra had class. You’ll never have class.” He then called the rappers students listen to “faggots.” He said, “You’re all going to get shot listening to rap music.” Even though Mr. Rob was joking, it wasn’t appropriate for the students to hear that from the teacher. The students respect Mr. Rob and look at him as a professional. He should not be acting like a student or buddy. Teachers talking to students with profanity and ignorance will not get students motivated for learning in a positive way. This is an example of negative communication with teachers and its effect on students.

In conclusion, teachers serve as role models to students even if a teacher himself doesn’t want to be one. Students should be confident enough to talk to their teachers about school or personal issues. These communication skills students develop with their teachers can prepare them for other kinds of communication in their future. Appropriate and respectful communication is the first step towards building a good learning community. Experienced teachers could help new teachers like Mr. Rob to joke and communicate with his students in an appropriate form.

#### **ANTONIA GEORGE**

Often in schools, one finds that some teachers treat certain students well and others poorly. These choices the teachers make are unfair because students who get help and support from the teacher will be better educated. In my research I observed three teachers who tried to teach the whole class while paying attention to individual students. I found that fairness is related to the attention teachers paid to students and how they communicated with students. The more effective teachers would explain the lesson to the whole class and then give help to those who needed it. Teachers who were less effective had a hard time explaining their lesson and they were not as responsive to student needs. They chose to help some students and not others.

Mr. Norman is a teacher I observed who had a hard time treating all of his students equally. For example, when one student

*In my schooling experience I have seen a lot of teachers create unequal learning opportunities.*

asked Mr. Norman for his help, he told her that it was a group quiz and didn't offer his assistance. The student wasn't sure what she was doing so she put any answer on the quiz with no explanation knowing that it was wrong. It was her hope that if she put any answer down the teacher might help her. Mr. Norman seemed to avoid communicating with certain students such as this particular girl. Mr. Norman also treated one of his students like Cinderella and another like the step sister.

In another class I observed, the teacher spent focused time with one student in his class, but didn't ignore the rest of his students. Mr. Howard is a teacher who also seems to be a good teacher from what I observed, even though he didn't talk much to his students because he already had told them to finish the project they were working on and they hopped right on it.

Mr. Howard is an example of a communicative teacher who knows when to work hard with individual students when the time is really needed. The following is from my observations:

*At the beginning of the period Mr. Howard went around to see if the students were doing their work. Then he went to one of his student's computers to listen to the soundtrack that he made. Later he sang with that same student at the piano. The rest of the period Mr. Howard was at the piano working with that one student.*

In this case the teacher was reviewing the song and showing the student how it was supposed to be sung while the other students were busy with work. Mr. Howard was able to work with one of his students because all of the other students seemed to know what they had to work on.

This issue of teachers supporting certain students is important for many reasons. First, it happens to a lot of students, not just in my school but in every other school too. Also I really don't think it's fair to whomever it happens to. In addition, some teachers have even said, "I don't care if y'all don't want to be taught. If I teach or don't teach, I still get paid." Last of

all, if these teachers really don't want to be fair with every one of their students they shouldn't be teaching. In my observation of classrooms, there was one teacher who treated students unequally. In my schooling experience, I have seen a lot of teachers create unequal learning opportunities.

If there isn't good communication between students and teachers there will not be a learning opportunity. Students can not learn from teachers who do not communicate well. Ms. Taylor is another example of a teacher who does communicate well. She would stand in front her class for about the first twenty minutes and then she would let her students work individually. Ms. Taylor and her students communicated well with each other. It was the way student-teacher communication should be. By that I mean when she said it was time to work, they had to listen and students did what they were supposed to do. It wasn't like she would talk and then they would talk back. When a student asked a question about the material Ms. Taylor provided, she gave the student the background information needed to answer the question. Ms. Taylor is an effective teacher.

In conclusion, my report argues that unequal treatment is a big issue in schools. The treatment of students is important because in my school we're trying to make small schools better. With teachers, unequal relationships between teachers and students seem to get worse when teachers favor certain students. The treatment of students is also important for the students and the teachers so that the students can get a better education and teachers can improve their teaching methods.

If the teacher would give all the students the same amount of time, then there wouldn't be unequal treatment. I want the district and the public to be more involved with these small schools. If the public sees what I have researched for the past 3 years, then I believe they will get more involved. I think that there could be a lot of positive changes at all the Kensington High Schools.

WILLIAM CROSBY

Think for a minute and put yourself in a teacher's position. How would you go about gaining respect from your students? What would be some strategies you would follow? Many teachers complain that they don't get respect from their students. After observing two new teachers in Kensington CAPA we learned that a teacher gains respect from his or her students by showing it first. Ms. Taylor is a first year teacher at Kensington CAPA but has been teaching for the last 12 years. She has gained the respect of her students by first respecting them. In our research, Ms. Taylor showed her respect by speaking to her students in a calm manner, helping them with their work, and letting them have input into class discussions. Mr. Norman, also a first year teacher, is having trouble gaining respect from his students.

*She has gained the respect of her students by first respecting them.*

His strategies of the reward system, the pop quiz, and his inconsistent responses to students are some of the reasons why he has not gained the students' respect.

For instance, I observed Ms. Taylor say in a calm, but firm way, "This is not the time or the place." These words were spoken after a student had used profanity in the classroom.

The student apologized to her thereby showing respect toward the teacher. The teacher also gains respect by helping the students with their class work. An example of this was when a student asked Ms. Taylor for a better understanding of the lesson, she attempted to find a less complicated way to explain the material to the student. Ms. Taylor also gained respect from her students by the way she structured her class. She would give students the privilege to talk and provide feedback about how they felt about the lesson. One example when this happened was when a boy asked her, "How are we and the monkey alike?" She gave him this example: "The same way we can do math they can put shapes in order." The student had a particular interest in the lesson and the teacher was willing to

respond to his inquiry. The reason why respectful relationships are so important is that teachers are wondering why students are disrespecting them and similarly students feel that they are not getting the respect they deserve. If students and teachers aren't able to maintain healthy, respectful relationships with one another, this does affect the way a teacher teaches and the students learn.

In another class we observed a teacher, Mr. Norman, who had more trouble trying to maintain a respectful classroom environment. This was Mr. Norman's first year teaching high school students. During a quiz, one student asked the teacher, "Is the question I did wrong?" and he told her, "Ask Priscilla." But later in my research, I saw him helping another student with his quiz. Unequal treatment could be a reason why some teachers don't get respect from students. Mr. Norman seems to be the kind of teacher who wants to have the power and does not let the students say much. In Mr. Norman's class, he had thrown a pop quiz at the students. This is a strategy where the teacher has all the say in his classroom and the students have no input at all. Mr. Norman doesn't have the respect of his students because the students sense the lack of trust he has in them. The pop quiz was an example of the lack of trust because if he had enough trust in his students, Mr. Norman wouldn't have had to pop a quiz on them.

I noticed a significant difference in the strategies that Mr. Norman and Ms. Taylor used. Ms. Taylor gave off this motherly feeling and treated students like her own children. She trusted her students by letting them interact in the classroom. Mr. Norman used prizes as a reward system for the students. The method Mr. Norman used seemed to be a form of bribery to seek the respect he wanted from his students. But by doing all

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this students didn't give him the respect he longed for. In contrast, in Ms. Taylor's class she allowed the students to have their discussions on a subject and this informed the lesson. It also told Ms. Taylor where she could take the lesson from there. This is really important for teachers to do because teachers who are not so experienced in their field can go back and see what will work for them next time.

Another issue that emerged from my research was the gender of the teachers. Are women teachers more effective at gaining respect from students than males? This is an area for future research.

The observations I did showed a lot of variation in the teachers at our school. The new teachers can learn strategies from the experienced teachers on how to teach their class and how to maintain respect in the classroom. If this was to happen my school would have a stronger staff where the more experienced teachers would support the new teachers in creating respectful classrooms. Teachers and students would be able to work together to improve student learning.

#### TERRESE THOMAS

How would you feel coming into your school or work place and getting patted down by a security guard? Would you be ready to learn or work? Would you be comfortable or feel safe? As a student I feel disrespected and violated. Why should I go through that process? Is it necessary to go through all of that just to get to your classroom? It makes me feel we as students are not trusted. Why don't teachers have to go through the same?

When I heard about small schools, I thought the classes would be smaller, everybody would get along together, and the relationships would improve so that students would not have to be under surveillance. As student researchers we wanted to document the relationship between students and staff. We gathered information about interactions by observing, and conducting

focus groups and interviews. As part of our YUC research on small schools, we took a trip to The MET, a small school in Providence Rhode Island. The MET School does not have metal detectors and it has no uniform policy. The climate of the school made me see the possibility for change. Being in Kensington I feel like a criminal wearing the same clothing as everybody else. I'm my own person with my own identity. What does a uniform have to do with getting our education? Why do we have to get patted down like a criminal? We are just coming to school to learn.

At the school entrance all students have to go through a metal detector. If the metal detector beeps, the security officers say, "walk back." The security officers have this wand which they use to scan the student's body. The girls that are pregnant don't have to go through the machine. They get checked by the lady Non-Teaching Assistant (NTA). When a student doesn't have his or her uniform on, the NTA confronts the student. The student gets mad and says, "Oh my goodness, she is making me go back and I just went through." All this happens before students even enter their classroom.

Even though we get patted down when we come to school by the NTA it's their job and that's what they get paid to do. These are the first people we encounter. They try their best to make it comfortable because the majority of our day is spent in school. During my research, I observed NTAs in the morning. We have one NTA the students call "pop-pop." He's like a grandfather to us. He encourages us to go to class. He gives us respect in the way he talks to us, recognizing we are teenagers, not babies. Mariel, another NTA, is a mother figure in my eyes. When girls are on that time of the month she supplies them with a sanitary napkin. We have another NTA named Mr. Smith who is like father to son. The reason I say that is because a father is hard on his son, trying to push him to try his best. For example, I observed Mr. Smith tell a boy,

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to get patted  
down like a  
criminal?  
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“Go to the class. You better be there when I go to the class and if you are not there you will be in trouble.” NTAs, ironically, have a better relationship with students than teachers do, even though they also play the role of checking them over when the students enter the school. The students give most of the NTAs respect because they communicate well together and because most of our NTAs live in the same community and come from the same background as the students. That means they know the students better than most teachers who live far away from the school.

Another way school feels like a prison is because the student can't go anywhere they like, similar to the way it is in prison. For example, when a student communicates with an NTA asking, “Can I go to the main office?” the NTA responds back, “You need a pass to go.” The NTA will then talk on the walkie talkie to another NTA and ask if they can walk with the student. This means that students can't be trusted.

Even though the NTAs try to connect to the students and make the students feel safe, most students take it as a sign of disrespect. When the students are patted down or a staff member has to go through their book bag, it makes the students flare with anger. By the time they reach the classroom, they don't have any thought about learning. My main point is teacher-student relationships and teaching and learning are made difficult by what happens outside the classroom. This means the teacher has to overcome the bad feelings that the students bring into the classroom and cannot guide the student to a better education.

In order to change this, the conditions in the schools have to be better structured—like they are supposed to be in small schools. Classes should be smaller, when we enter the building only the wand should be necessary (not the metal detector), and the fact that we are small means there should be a better environment in the school where everyone knows everybody and there is more trust between the students and the staff.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

General Recommendations to district and school leaders, students and community groups.

<b>Recommendations to:</b>	<b>The Recommendations</b>
<b>Principals and teachers</b>	Create opportunities for teachers to observe other teachers—peer coaching
<b>School, district, and principal</b>	Hire an educational partner to support all teachers
<b>Community and students</b>	Fight for incentives for veteran teachers who come to teach at the Kensington small schools
<b>Principal, school, and planning team</b>	When site selection happens, aim for a balance in experienced and new teachers
<b>Students, principal, and teachers</b>	Provide students with opportunities to fill out evaluation forms about their classes. Students fill them out when you are given the opportunity.
<b>Students</b>	Fight for a student academic advisory committee to identify teaching strategies that work.
<b>Principal</b>	Include NTAs and district police in conversations about building trust and creating a positive school climate.
<b>School planning team</b>	Structure a transition period where practices around security change and begin to communicate a climate of trust
<b>Principal, lead NTA</b>	Provide additional training for NTAs on how to build trust and security in the building
<b>Principal, community, and Mr.Vallas</b>	Provide community building and social activities for each of the small schools to include NTA's, students, teachers, parents and custodial staff.

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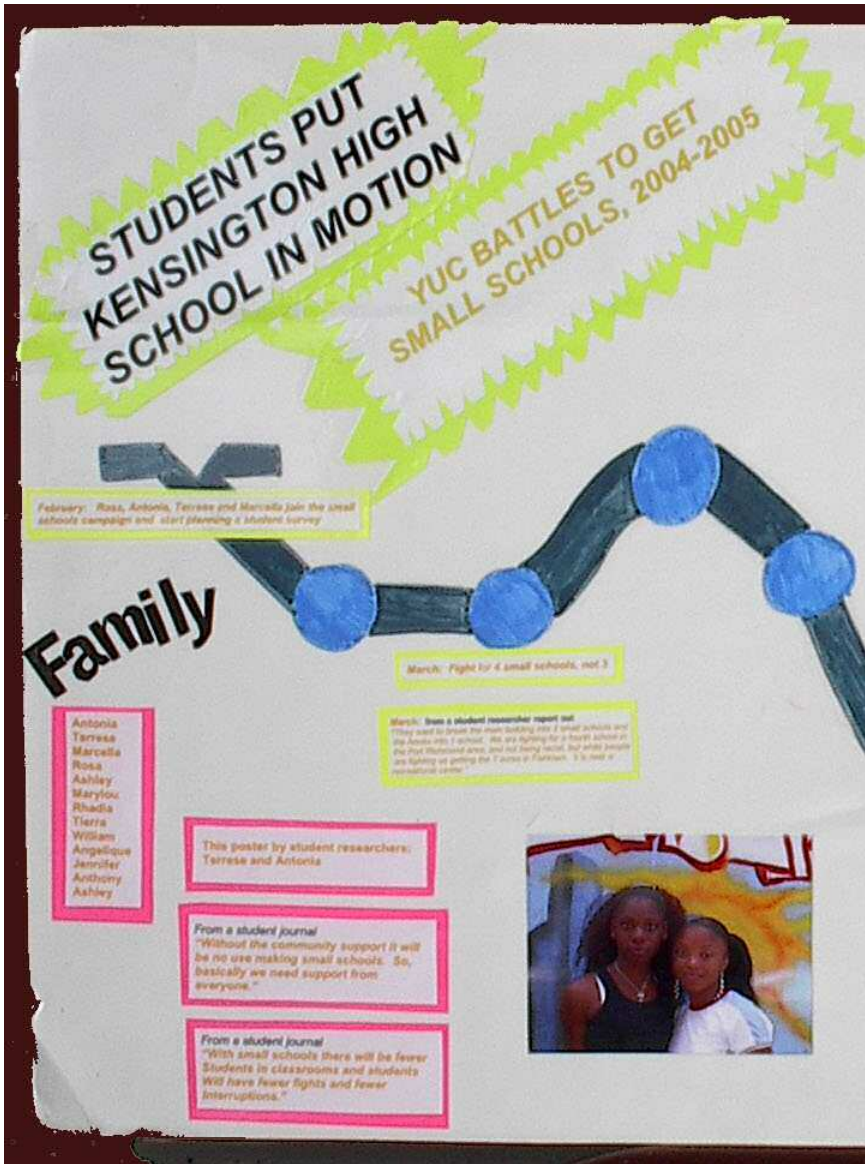
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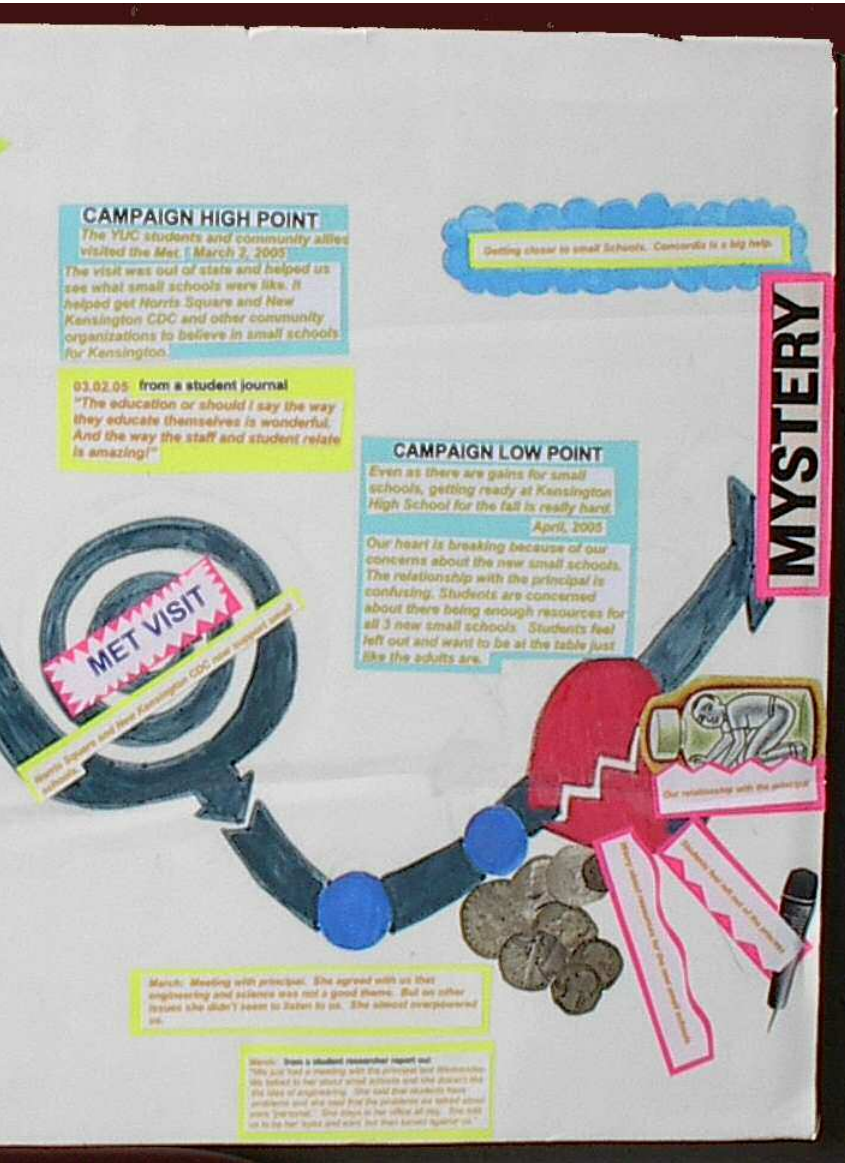
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APPENDIX A



This roadmap represents our small schools campaign journey in 2004-05



It illustrates the road blocks as well as our positive vision for the future.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Classroom Observation**

1. Introduce myself to the teacher and explain the research project
2. Ask permission to observe the classroom, and to record a brief interview with them.
3. Interview: Ask what the plans are for today's class. Ask if the plans are going to be different from the usual classes, and tell the teacher that you would like to meet up with him/her later to discuss how their class plans worked out.
4. Observe the surroundings by watching the students' body language, speech, interactions with other students, also how long it takes to get the lesson plan started.
5. Once class is started look at the lesson plan and how the students and teachers react to each other. Also, observe how many students are in the class, and if the late students distract the teacher or other students from the class lesson.
6. The things we want to focus on are:
  - What are the students doing?
  - How many students are present in class?
  - What is being taught in class?
  - How do the students and teachers communicate?
  - What is the teacher's style of teaching?
  - How long does lesson last?



- How is the classroom cleaned up or, if students just walk out of class, also how long does it take to clean up, and basically how do students behave leaving class?

- How do the students work in small groups?

7. Have a brief interview with the teacher after class and ask if the class went the way expected, or what was different than expected. Thank the teacher.

## **Cafeteria Observation**

Scan the environment from the staircase, see how crowded the students are, and how they are reacting to each other and to the adults.

How does the staff, NTAs, and students react to each other?

See if there are student-student conflicts, student-staff conflicts, or student-NTA conflicts.

How do the lunch aides react to students, and are they doing their job giving each student a lunch? Also, how does the lunch room look like after lunch?

## **Student Interviews**

Introduce yourself.

Say that they were in a classroom that you observed and you were wondering if you could ask some questions to help out your research.

Explain that your research topic is based on student-adult relationships.

Ask permission to tape the conversation. (Tell the student that you want to tape the conversation because what they say is very important, that its only for you to look over.)

1. How do you feel about your relationship with your teacher? Tell them to describe their relationships with their teacher by giving examples.
2. This year we have small schools, so how would you compare your relationships with your teachers now than from what it was last year?
3. Do you feel that since our school became a small school you have been respected more by students, and faculty ( students, teachers, principal, NTAs other staff)?
4. Do you feel that since this year we have small school procedures that positively affects the teacher and student relationship and how you learn?
5. Do you think that the relationships we have in our small school affect how safe it is in our small school?

## APPENDIX C

### Reflections by Youth on the Project

*The youth researchers have had opportunities for reflection on their work with RFA throughout the project: through journal writing, peer feedback, end of meeting evaluations, and public forums. Below, you will see some of their comments in which they assess the opportunity the project offered to contribute to improving their schools, and to improving on their academic skills. Overall, they conveyed that the experience of working individually and collectively to research and write was an important experience – larger and different from anything they had previously undertaken.*

#### **About the experience:**

“This is something new. It’s like I’ve never been through anything like this. I never really did research and stuff like this before. So just doing research to help my school and people at my school is just a good experience.”

“The journal was important to me because like we would write in our journal and then our mentors would reflect back on the words that we say--like they give a personal note.”

“Being a youth worker makes me proud of what I accomplished and proud of myself for what I have done. This also makes me proud of my peers to show we are leaders of today and will be tomorrow if we continue to do the right thing.”

#### **Influence on school work:**

“I’ve learned a lot from this writing. I became a better writer and my English teacher told me I got better. That’s how I knew.”

“[My English teacher] says I was a pretty good writer...but since I been doing this research and all this writing it seems like my writing has skyrocketed as part of the skills of learning how to write longer and just to write better.”

I learned that “now’s the time when you know you all have to start doing [multiple drafts] and it’s actually better for me to proof read something and then when I finish proof reading it to then go into my rough draft instead of just going to the final draft off the bat.” My teacher said “when I was writing my report on *The Crucible*...oh my gosh...your draft is so good,

and I did like five of them. That's all I kept thinking about was [people] telling me you're going to start needing to do drafts."

"I now observe everything around me and form my own opinions and act on them too. Participating in the research program helped me learn to do that. I actually improved my English skills in paragraph writing. When the honors teacher asks me to do an essay I now know how to use evidence or examples to back up my point."

"I'm used to writing to myself or a close friend or a teacher, but when you have to write like past that, it's harder because you got to make sense of it, and you got to make sense so that other people will know besides yourself. It's a lot of corrections and all that [we] had to do. It was hard work but it paid off...I learned that I have to push myself and stop staying in my safe zone."

**Speaking out:**

"I had to push myself to speak in front of everyone and then it made me feel like...the topic was really important, not only to us but to other people out there because they really were interested in knowing what we wanted to talk about so I had to dig deep and be brave enough to just do it and just say what I had to say and so I did and I was proud of myself for doing it."

**Working as a team:**

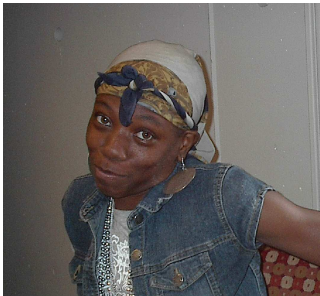
"I learned how to work as a team. Because when I first came, I knew that that would be one of my problems. I never worked as a team, I work by myself. It's just like playing a sport. If you think you're the team then you're going to go nowhere. Same with the project: If you don't let people share their ideas and experiences, then it's just not going to work."

"When I looked at [the research report] I didn't think I wrote all that. And my peers around me did a lot of stuff and so like when it all comes together and you see the final product, it's crazy...in a good way!"

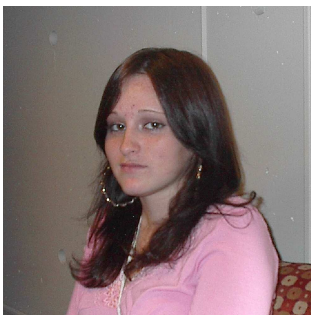
## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**William Crosby** is a senior at Kensington Creative and Performing Arts School. He is a member of Youth United for Change and has been a youth researcher for the past two years with Research for Action. He says about himself, “I am very passionate about singing. I sing to express myself. I am also very goofy and lively. My life long goal is to become a professional singer or to work with animals. I want to thank my mom and dad for all their support. My time as a youth researcher has been very positive in a lot of ways, and I want to thank all my mentors for the help they gave me.”



**Antonia George** is an eleventh grader at Kensington Creative and Performing Arts School. She is a member of Youth United for Change and has been a youth researcher for the past two and a half years with Research for Action. She says, “When I’m not in school, I use my free time to write poetry and hang out with my family and friends. I am a nice, kind, respectful, self confident, outgoing, funny, and goofy young lady. I love dance and would like to go to college to become a choreographer. I am also a great singer.”



**Ashley Hatch** is an eleventh grader at Kensington High School Business, Finance and Entrepreneurship. She is a member of Youth United for Change and for a year and a half has been a youth researcher with Research for Action. She says her special interests are poetry, employment and nursing. “I hope to work with a variety of people, including children and the elderly. My major interest, however, is involvement in my family.”

**Rahdia Robinson** is an eleventh grader at Kensington Business, Finance and Entrepreneurship. She is a member of Youth United for Change and for a year and a half has been a youth researcher with Research for Action. In addition to working to make her high school a high quality small school, another passion she has is for dancing.

“To me, dancing is poetry for the body. It expresses my fun-outgoing personality. I too would like to be a nurse because I love helping others and seeing people happy.”



**Terrese Thomas** is an eleventh grader at Kensington Culinary. She is a member of Youth United for Change and has been a youth researcher for two and a half years. She says, “I am on the school planning team. I am one of the captains of the Kensington High School Drill Team. I am one of six children of Idella Thomas. I play football, basketball and baseball in my spare time. I enjoy culinary arts and would like to become a chef. I work 5 days a week and maintain a 3.0+ GPA. I have been accepted to CCP Dual Enrollment for 2007. I want to thank my aunt, my mom (rest in peace), grandmother, my friends and the One that was there when I really needed the help.”





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