

Creative Brief

Client: New York City Department of Education
Project: 2016 Cover Design Competition
Date: December 2015

What should you be trying to do?

The *2017 New York City High School Directory* will be a critical tool for seventh and eighth grade students researching and applying to over 400 high schools in New York City for the 2017-2018 school year. As a participant, you are responsible for creating a cover design that speaks to all of the students, families, and guidance counselors in New York that will be using this important resource.

What's the opportunity?

You will be competing for an opportunity to work closely with award-winning comic book artist and illustrator [Phil Jimenez](#) as well as other design professionals. The winning cover design will be featured on a yearlong campaign that includes the large-scale distribution of the Directory and other outreach materials including presentations, signs, postcards, and more. If your design isn't used for High School Admissions, it could be used to represent another admissions process such as Middle School.

Who are we trying to connect with?

The target audience for this Directory is students in grades 5-8 and their families. The cover design should contain appropriate images and language, as it is a government publication produced for students and their families. When students receive a Directory, many of them are just beginning their journey through High School Admissions. The cover should not only reflect your own unique vision but speak to what the experience is for most students—an exciting and sometimes overwhelming experience. The design should convey a sense of openness and accessibility to applicants unfamiliar with the process, many of whom are non-native English speakers.

What does a successful design look like?

Your design should be unique—can you submit something different than previous Directory covers? Create a design in which image, color, typography, and layout (especially white space) are all considered and support the main message for the intended audience.

Draw inspiration from your perspective as a New York City student:

- Why are you proud to be a New York City student?
- What was your experience like when transitioning from middle school to high school?
- How are you preparing for life after high school?

Represent your school journey with a unique image. Try to avoid common images (e.g. apples, pencils) and do not use previously copyrighted images, including identifiable buildings in Manhattan. Designs that incorporate people should include more than a single individual and represent the diversity of New York City.

While we accept hand-drawn entries, submissions created in Photoshop, Illustrator, or InDesign are strongly preferred. If you submit a hand-drawn submission and advance to the finalist round, you will be required to recreate your design using one of the aforementioned design programs.

How does the competition work?

- For complete competition rules and regulations, read the [Cover Design Competition Guidelines](#).
- The competition is open for submissions on Monday, January 11, 2016.
- All submissions are due on Friday, January 29.
- Finalists are notified between Monday, February 8 and Friday, February 12.
- Mandatory workshops for finalists are on the following Wednesdays at the [Cooper Hewitt Design Center](#) (111 Central Park North at 110th Street): February 24; March 2; March 9; March 16.
- A public vote, which will determine one of the top four winners, will be held online in late March.
- Winners will be announced during the Awards Ceremony at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (2 East 91st Street) on April 6.

How do I submit my design?

Please visit www.nyc.gov/schools/coverdesign to understand all contest rules and see last year's winners.

- Submit a *fully completed* Cooper Hewitt consent form.
- Submit a *fully completed* NYC Department of Education consent form.
- Check your schedule! Will you be able to attend all of the required workshops?
- Set the front cover dimensions to 8.5"x11". Also consider how your cover will work as a thumbnail when marketed online. (Read Craig Mod's Hack the Cover—http://craigmod.com/journal/hack_the_cover/)
- Include the following title—"2017 New York City High School Directory."
- Use a typeface in the Franklin Gothic typeface family for all cover text.
- Include the NYC Department of Education logo (download it [here](#)).
- Save your files as a PDF that is 2MB or under.
- Send your entry to coverdesign@schools.nyc.gov by Friday, January 29.
- Hold onto your final design files (accepted design programs: Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator).