

**District Objectives for English/Language Arts K-12
2007-2008**

Language Arts

Elementary

- Sustain the K-6 balanced literacy program. Meet with the turnkey trainers at least once per quarter to problem solve district-wide issues related to reading instruction. Utilize the turnkey trainers to provide district-wide and building level staff development for new and returning teachers and teacher assistants. Utilize turnkey trainers to develop a program of classroom visits within and across schools. Analyze K-2 reading data collected through EXCEL program and adjust benchmarks as appropriate. Continue to update materials and resources for teaching reading and for assessing reading progress.

Evaluation: In what ways was the K-6 balanced literacy program sustained throughout the 2007-2008 school year?

Meetings with turnkey trainers were conducted throughout the school year. Topics addressed included the RIGBY and WRAP assessment, reading benchmarks for K-2, time allocation in grades 3-6 and training for the administration of an alternate reading assessment for grades 3-6. The turnkey trainers planned and presented staff development for new and returning teachers and teacher assistants as well as for all teachers of reading K-6 at the March workshop day. The K-2 reading data has been analyzed and the benchmarks adjusted. Additional reading materials and resources were obtained.

- Through the K-12 Language Arts Steering Committee/ District Writing Committee, continue the study of writing in grades K-6. Implement and revise the units of study written during the spring of 2007. Provide support and feedback for teachers who are implementing these units, including feedback within their classrooms. Begin curriculum mapping across grade levels. Expand participation in in-service sessions and developing units of writing instruction to include a greater number of elementary teachers. Include all principals in the in-service sessions.

Evaluation: What steps were taken to improve writing instruction in classrooms at the elementary level?

The study of writing in grades K-6 continued with the members of the Writing Committee. This group met to develop a new unit of study entitled "The Writerly Life". Members of this group presented the units of study developed during the 2006-2007 school year to grade level colleagues during the district grade level meetings. Also, presented at grade level meetings to teachers in grades K-6 was an overview of the work the K-12 Language Arts Steering Committee/District Writing Committee has completed for the previous two years.

- Investigate current approaches to teaching spelling in the elementary grades with an emphasis on alignment with word work in the reading program and some degree of compatibility with the writing program. Make recommendations for formalizing agreed upon approaches to teaching spelling in elementary classrooms.

Evaluation: Was spelling instruction investigated and were recommendations made?

A group of teachers representing grades K-6 and all six elementary schools met to begin the discussion about spelling instruction in the district. The discussion will continue as materials, resources and information are collected and reviewed.

- Analyze results of and improve performance on the NYS grades 3-6 ELA assessments.

Evaluation: Were the results of the grades 3-6 ELA's analyzed? How did 2006-2007 results compare with the results from the previous year?

At the time of this review, the results of the New York State ELA assessment for grades 3-6 have not been received in district. Once the results are available, the data will be analyzed and compared to the previous year's results.

- Begin the process of developing an electronic elementary report card that reflects the changes in reading and writing instruction.

Evaluation: Was the district wide process of developing an electronic report card for grades 1-6 begun?

This objective has been placed in a holding pattern until the investigation of the spelling program is completed.

Junior High School

- Implement current best practices in writing instruction. Instruct and practice various genres.

Evaluation: Were current best practices in writing instruction implemented into classroom programs? Did teachers instruct and provide practice opportunities for various genres?

Teachers at grades seven and eight incorporated current best practices for writing instruction as observed by their supervisor during formal and informal observations and as indicated in their weekly lesson plans. Teachers implemented instructional activities and strategies including, but not limited to: pre-writing discussions, modeling of writing, writer's notebook assignments, revision process and choice in writing. Teachers at both grade levels addressed a variety of genres such as: creative writing, poetry, editorials, research papers, memoir, literary essay, timed writing, short and extended response writing and journaling.

Teachers at both grade levels provided instruction that addressed sentence structure, paragraph structure, grammar, mechanics and spelling. Teachers submitted writing portfolios to the department supervisor for review of student writing. Portfolios indicated the New York State ELA Standards being addressed and included samples of student work reflecting varied writing skills and abilities. Grade seven and grade eight teachers implemented writing units into their curriculum that had been developed last year through the work completed with the District's Writing Consultant and through Summer Curriculum Workshops. Both units were successful with regard to curricular objectives, student engagement and implementation of effective instructional strategies and practices.

- Investigate the frequency of instances of plagiarism at the junior high. Determine the need for a policy regarding plagiarism. If necessary, develop a plagiarism policy.

Evaluation: How often do instances of plagiarism occur? Does the junior high school need a plagiarism policy? If necessary, was a policy developed?

Few instances of plagiarism have occurred. At this time, it does not appear to be necessary to implement a plagiarism policy at this level. We will continue to monitor and assess the need for a policy during the 2008- 2009 school year.

- Implement current best practices in reading instruction. Instruct and model active reading strategies. Instruct comprehension skills and strategies using text of appropriate reading level.

Evaluation: Were current best practices regarding reading instruction implemented into classroom programs? Were active reading strategies taught and modeled? Were reading comprehension skills and strategies taught?

Current best practices for reading instruction are implemented in the seventh and eighth grade English classrooms. Teachers provide modeling of and instruction of various active reading strategies including but not limited to: making text to text connections, making text to self connections, visualizing, noting questions regarding passages, and noting unknown vocabulary. This instruction is incorporated into reading unit curriculum. Teachers instruct comprehension skills and strategies throughout reading units and as related to assessment preparation. Specific strategies such as rereading passages, highlighting/underlining passages, and identifying textual evidence within a passage are some skills and strategies that are emphasized.

Two 8th grade teachers, two 7th grade teachers and the Department Supervisor attended the Meeting the Challenges of Adolescent Literacy Conference at the University at Albany in November of 2007.

- Through the work of the District English Language Arts Steering Committee, continue our work to begin to develop writing curriculum.

Evaluation: What progress was made toward developing writing curriculum?

Seventh and eighth grade teachers implemented writing units that were developed during the 2006-2007 school year. Seventh grade teachers implemented a poetry unit and eighth grade teachers implemented an editorial unit. Both grade levels found the newly implemented writing units to be successful. Students were engaged in instructional activities and student writing pieces were generally well done and met instructional objectives.

During the 2007-2008 school year, English teachers continued their work with the District's ELA consultant. Teachers continued their investigation of instructional strategies and began developing a "Writerly Life" unit. Teachers participated in two half-day grade level workshops (as of April 2008) and are planning a third workshop in May 2008. Seventh grade teachers plan to develop a third writing unit during the summer of 2008.

- Analyze the 7th and 8th grade NYS ELA assessment data including the special education subgroup in particular. Make instructional recommendations for program revisions/adjustments as appropriate for general education and special education programs.

Evaluation: Were results analyzed? Were instructional recommendations/adjustments deemed necessary?

Results of the January 2007 assessments were analyzed. Individual students were provided with student data and comparative building grade level data.

Teachers reviewed data. Specific instructional guidance was provided, as needed, by the department supervisor and building principal. A pilot English language arts class was implemented to address an appropriate population of students with special needs. Students were enrolled in AIS as needed based upon their ELA assessment results. Services that students may be enrolled in include: monitoring, after school assistance, Fundamental ELA, remedial reading, Block Support, and FOCUS.

January 2008 New York State ELA assessment results are embargoed at this time.

- Review English Language Arts AIS programs and make recommendations for program revisions/adjustments as appropriate.

Evaluation: Were English Language Arts AIS programs reviewed? Were program revisions/adjustments deemed necessary?

The monitoring and after school assistance AIS services are being implemented and are appropriate for some students requiring additional instructional assistance. The Block Support, FOCUS, Remedial Reading and Fundamental ELA programs provide a higher level of intervention services for students. The Fundamental ELA program has incorporated the BIG 8 English Review Book as an additional resource for instruction. The specific assessment data for 2008 is embargoed at this time.

High School

- Continue to provide for additional work in the area of literacy and reading instruction. The emphasis will be on active reading in particular literal comprehension skills, inferential comprehension and rhetorical awareness.

Evaluation: What activities did English teachers participate in to advance their work with reading comprehension?

The English department consistently works to advance the reading objective. At both the September and November Workshops, we reviewed strategies for developing active readers. In addition, this year teachers are including as part of their monthly reports a listing of specific pre-reading, active reading, and post reading activities for one piece of literature covered during the month This fall four English teachers attended the conference on literacy at the University at Albany. On the March Workshop day, we again addressed reading with a focus on strategies for taking reading comprehension exams.

- Develop a departmental plan to involve students in opportunities to write frequently in a variety of genres. Continue to work with the ELA Steering Committee on the district writing plan.

Evaluation: What plan was developed?

The department has been working on a plan which will ensure that students experience writing frequently and in multiple genres. A variety of writing activities are integrated into major literature units.

- Design a major unit in 9R, 10R and 11R that focuses on a particular genre of writing and includes a variety of mini lessons as well as exposure to several models of professional writing in that genre.

Evaluation: What units were developed?

This summer teachers designed three units (one for the short story, one for mythology, and one for Of Mice and Men) for grade 9. These units, which can be used at the AP, Honors, and Regents levels, integrate reading, writing, and grammar. They include multiple writing opportunities and use modeling to teach writing. Grades 10 and 11 have begun work on similar units.

- Monitor the two new senior electives, Exploring Cultures Through Literature and Contemporary Literacy.

Evaluation: What curriculum was developed for these courses? How many students enrolled? Did students successfully complete the courses?

Both of the new elective courses have enrolled for the 2007-08 year. A total of 53 students selected Exploring Cultures and a total of 41 students chose Contemporary Literacy. The students were surveyed at the end of the first semester and were very positive about both courses.

- Continue to work on SAT preparation.

Evaluation: What department activities occurred to better prepare teachers for SAT preparation activities?

This is an ongoing English Department objective. Teachers at all grade levels provide regular instruction in reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing. The work done on the March Workshop day was designed to address reading comprehension preparation for standardized tests.

- Implement the new Plagiarism policy.

Evaluation: How was Plagiarism policy put into effect?

The Plagiarism Policy was developed by the English Department and adopted by Principal's Council. It is in place this school year. At the end of the year, the Principal's Council will look at necessary revisions.

- Develop a subcommittee within the English department to develop a proposal for a Writing Lab at Shaker High School.

Evaluation: What recommendations did the subcommittee make for a Writing Lab?

A department subcommittee was formed and has had discussions about establishing a writing lab. Since the department plan involves an additional staff member, a space in the building for the lab, as well as furniture and equipment, we have designated the writing lab as a long-term goal that will have budget implications.