

OFFICE OF RESEARCH, EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

MEMORANDUM

To: Eric Witherspoon, Superintendent

From: Regina Armour, Literacy Coordinator, Judith Levinson, Director of Research, Evaluation & Assessment

cc: Laura Cooper, Judith Ruhana, Jennifer Fisher, Robert Gottlieb and Lynn McAllister

Date: May 22, 2008

Subject: Subject:

- þ Achieve measurable academic gains in reading across the curriculum;
- þ Improve student reading in academic courses.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the activities of the literacy program this school year as well as to provide evaluation data as part of our continuing effort to monitor our literacy efforts.

There are two components of the ETHS Literacy Program. One component of the literacy program is the provision of support for students who enter ETHS reading below grade level. Grade 9 students take a reading class or are enrolled in a double-period Read 180 class. Generally, students in the READ 180 classes take Humanities Enriched, an English/History course that emphasizes the use of reading strategies. The program also provides sustained support in grades 9-12 to students not yet reading at grade level.

The core strategies are:

- o Think and Search questions
- o CLOZE (an activity that nurtures reading comprehension)
- o ReQuest (reciprocal questioning)
- o Semantic Maps (vocabulary builder and developer)

To ensure that students are actively engaged in reading and thinking about course texts, teachers also design lessons and units around essential questions.

What we learned in 2007-2008:

- o Reading classes are not enough for students to substantially increase their achievement; reading instruction needs to be embedded in the content areas.
- o It is important to “capture the reader” by utilizing Think & Search (T/S) questions that help teachers assess students’ reading comprehension.
- o The CORE strategies and the Framework benefit readers at all levels, not just struggling readers.
- o The students need time to read and complete assessment activities (T/S) in class.
- o Literacy work must be defined by the role of reading in the content and around the skills of each discipline.
- o Each department needs a tailored literacy plan based on student needs, teacher capacity and content competencies.
- o Support for teachers must be responsive to teachers’ professional development needs. Teachers are at various levels in terms of embedding literacy in their instruction and respond to different forms of professional development and support.
- o Implementation of literacy changes requires the focused work of department chairs, administrators and coaches—as well as teachers to observe, gather student work, provide feedback and to monitor changes in the classroom.

Dr. Tatum completed a mid-year report on changes in teachers’ instructional practices and students’ behaviors. A final report will be available in early summer.

Focus for 2008-2009:

- o Delving “deeper” in special education will involve redesigning the Resource Program curriculum to include explicit literacy instruction.
- o The literacy program will expand to include Math, Science and Applied Sciences and Technologies (AST) departments; eventually all the departments will be a part of a school-wide effort.
- o Science is working with Drs. Kimberly and Louis Gomez from University of Illinois Chicago and Northwestern University, respectively, to develop the biology curriculum that scaffolds and supports literacy to help students be more successful in science.
- o Math – expanding the focus by having all math teachers learn and practice techniques for developing literacy in their students, specific to the math classroom
- o Coaching will be expanded to support teachers in math, science and AST in addition to English, history and special education.
- o There will be significant work over the summer around writing curriculum that integrates literacy instruction.
- o 1 Humanities teachers’ will use differentiated instruction will be tied directly to literacy.

Part II: The Literacy Program

The Literacy Program is designed to address the needs of students reading below grade level. Grade 9 students take a reading class or are enrolled in the double-period class that uses READ 180, an intensive reading intervention that addresses students' needs on multiple fronts through technology, print, and responsive instruction. Students in Read180 generally are enrolled in 1 Humanities Enriched. The Literacy Program also provides sustained support in grades 10-12 to students not yet reading at grade level.

There have been two changes this year:

There was a "protected" group of students reading close to or at grade level by March 2007 in their freshman year who were transitioned into regular level sophomore Humanities (English and History). They were identified based on their achievement within the content classes and their individual reading assessments. They are "protected" by more support and scaffolding provided by teachers skilled at integrating literacy.

A number of students were transitioned from READ 180 into Freshman Reading or from 1 Humanities Enriched into 1 Humanities 2 at

Longitudinal Analyses

An analysis was carried out to track the progress of students who started in the Literacy Program as freshmen in 2006-07 and are now in their second year at the high school. Two data sets were analyzed: EXPLORE to PLAN quartile change; and performance in sophomore courses for semester 1 of this school year.

- o Of the 34 students in READ 180/Enriched in 2006-07 who had both EXPLORE and PLAN scores, the percentage of students falling in each of four quartiles remained essentially the same; only 6 percent scored above the 50th percentile on the PLAN test.
- o Of the 41 students in Freshman Reading in 2006-07 who had both EXPLORE and PLAN scores, 22 percent scored above the 50th percentile on the PLAN test. A small percentage (7 %) moved down into the bottom quartile.

As sophomores, some students do quite well in English and history, receiving A, B, and C grades. However, a large percentage of both former READ 180 and Freshman Reading students receive D and F grades, particularly in English (32%-36%). Attendance continues to be a problem for these students, particularly for the former RE

2006-08 to 2007-08 Literacy Program Course Tracking

As in past years, an analysis was conducted to track the students in each type of literacy course in 2006-07 and see what classes they were placed in this school year, 2007-08.

- o Of the 55 students in 1 Humanities Enriched/READ 180 in 2006-07:
 - ~ 18 ended up in 2 Humanities Enriched
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