

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: Literacy Report 2007-2008

One of the board goals for 2007-08 is to continue to focus on improving literacy. Specifically, there are two aspects of this goal:

- Achieve measurable academic gains in reading across the curriculum;
- 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 second component of the literacy initiative is Achievement Now, the literacy work that is being conducted in consultation with Dr. Alfred Tatum of the University of Illinois-Chicago Campus. What we found in previous evaluations is that we need additional literacy work beyond the reading classes and the humanities enriched courses. Some reading instruction can be provided in a separate class; however reading at the high school level means learning to read and think in discipline-specific ways. For this reason, in Achievement Now, teachers in English, history and special education work with Dr. Tatum in a professional development program that focuses on a common approach to integrating reading in all English and history courses at all grade levels.

Part I: Achievement Now

Achievement NOW focuses on both engaging students emotionally and intellectually with essential texts *and* integrating skill and strategy instruction. One way to achieve this is to provide direct, explicit reading strategy instruction while focusing multiple ways for students to become smarter about the content. Four core strategies were identified for students at ETHS based on the gathering of preliminary data by Dr. Alfred Tatum about instructional practices and other variables that impact students' reading achievement (i.e., school climate, student engagement, curriculum materials, classroom environment, interaction among teachers and students).

The core strategies are:

- Think and Search questions
- CLOZE (an activity that nurtures reading comprehension)
- ReQuest (reciprocal questioning)
- 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:

- Reading classes are not enough for students to substantially increase their achievement; reading instruction needs to be embedded in the content areas.
- It is important to “capture the reader” by utilizing Think & Search (T/S) questions that help teachers assess students’ reading comprehension.
- The CORE strategies and the Framework benefit readers at all levels, not just struggling readers.
- The students need time to read and complete assessment activities (T/S) in class.
- Literacy work must be defined by the role of reading in the content and around the skills of each discipline.
- Each department needs a tailored literacy plan based on student needs, teacher capacity and content competencies.
- 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.
- 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:

- Delving “deeper” in special education will involve redesigning the Resource Program curriculum to include explicit literacy instruction.
- 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.
- 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.
- Math – expanding the focus by having all math teachers learn and practice techniques for developing literacy in their students, specific to the math classroom
- Coaching will be expanded to support teachers in math, science and AST in addition to English, history and special education.
- There will be significant work over the summer around writing curriculum that integrates literacy instruction.
- 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 the beginning of second semester based on achievement, improved reading assessments, and teacher recommendations.

How are students doing in the Literacy Program?

Data were collected using the student information database to gather information on student demographics, grades, subsequent course placements, and EXPLORE/PLAN scores. Other assessment data were also analyzed such as scores from a reading inventory that is part of the READ 180 program. We do not yet have post-test data from the Gates McGinitie Reading Test or PSAE scores. We will have these data later in the summer (Gates) or early fall (PSAE).

Patterns with respect to grades and test performance for the most part were similar to prior years for students. Key highlights are summarized below:

Demographics

- More males (55%) than females (45%) continue to qualify for freshman reading or Read 180 courses. Of the 140 students enrolled in reading and humanities enriched courses, approximately 80 percent are Black and Latino students; 80 percent of them are from low-income families.

Grades

- There has been a decrease in NC grades since 2005-06 in all three courses.
- Over time, the students in 2 Humanities Enriched courses have increased the percentage of A/B grades and decreased the percentage of D/F grades since 2005-06.

Test Data

- Data for students in the READ 180 program were collected on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) assessment for the second year. In general, across the different READ 180 classes (regular, Academy and special education), over 50 percent made gains of 50 points or more with several making gains of 200 points or greater, on the SRI between the fall and spring test dates. Over 20 percent of students in the READ 180 classes (even more in the Academy class) had negative growth.
- Academy students in READ 180 took the NWEA MAP test both in the fall and spring of this school year. MAP sets targets for these students based on their fall scores. In all, 67 percent of the nine students tested met or exceeded their target scores. MAP considers a percentage over 50 percent as good progress for a class.

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.
 - 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.
 - 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 READ 180 students, as evidenced by NC grades (11%-13%).

Special Pilot of 2 Humanities Options

- For the 2007-08 school year, three placements were possible for students who had been in grade 9 literacy courses during the 2006-07 school year:
 - Students who scored at the 50th percentile nationally by the end of 9th grade exited the literacy program.
 - Students who did not yet reach that benchmark were placed in 1 Humanities Enriched or in the “protected” section of regular level 1 Humanities.
- The performance of these former literacy students was compared to the performance of the total students enrolled in 2 Humanities 2 or 2 Humanities Enriched.
 - Students who had exited the program and were placed in 2 Humanities 2 (regular level) classes performed quite well achieving a greater percentage of A/B grades and no NC grades compared to their classmates who had not received special reading instruction as a freshman.
 - Former READ 180/Reading students placed in the “protected” classes because they required additional support and scaffolding had more D, F and NC grades than other 2 Humanities 2 students. However, teachers are encouraged because these students were provided with a rigorous regular 2 Humanities 2 curriculum with full text rather than an Enriched curriculum where students may read abridged texts.
 - Students in the 2 Humanities Enriched classes had a higher percentage of A/B grades than in the regular or protected classes.

Placement Changes

- As in prior years, students’ class performance and test data were reviewed at the end of semester 1 and placement changes were made at the beginning of semester 2 for a number of students. The good news is there is a system in place for monitoring placement and making changes when appropriate.
 - 11 percent of students in READ 180 were moved into Freshman Reading (6 of 54);
 - 15 percent of students in Humanities Enriched were moved into 1 Humanities 2 (8 of 54);
 - 13 percent of students in 2 Humanities Enriched were moved to 2 Humanities 2 (4 of 31);

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.
 - Of the 55 students in 1 Humanities Enriched/READ 180 in 2006-07:
 - 18 ended up in 2 Humanities Enriched
 - 13 ended up in level 2 courses
 - 2 students ended up in honors English or history
 - 15 students ended up in special education instructional classes or Academy English/History
 - 7 students no longer attend ETHS
 - Of the 73 students in Freshman Reading in 2006-07:
 - 2 students ended up in 2 Humanities Enriched
 - 46 students ended up in level 2 English courses
 - 7 students ended up in honors English and 9 students in honors history courses
 - 9 students ended up in special education instructional classes or Academy English or history courses
 - 9 students no longer attend ETHS
 - Of the 44 students in 2 Humanities Enriched in 2006-07:
 - 26 students ended up in 3 English 1 (a literacy support class)
 - 12 students are no longer enrolled in a literacy support class
 - 1 student was enrolled in a special education history class
 - 6 students no longer attend ETHS

Next year the changes will be:

- Students between the 40th and 49th percentile will be placed in regular Humanities classes. Traditionally, they were enrolled in a level two section. These students will receive support through pre-teaching and re-teaching in their reading classes to be successful in mixed level 1 Humanities.
- Reading classes will be redesigned to be a direct support to the Humanities classes.
- Curriculum for special education resource classes will be redesigned to provide support to English, history and humanities classes.
- READ 180 will serve three groups of students: special education; English language learners; and general education.