

Third Annual English Language Arts Faculty Exchange Workshop Minutes November 4, 2009

SUNY Orange, Middletown, NY

In attendance: Teachers and administrators from Orange County High Schools, OU BOCES, SUNY Orange, Mount Saint Mary College, Erik Sweet, NYSED Associate in English Language Arts

Guiding Question: How can we work together to best prepare students for success in English Language Arts (and other subject areas) at the college level and beyond?

Mr. Sweet gave a presentation on “Collaborating to Promote Student Success in English Language Arts.”

Mr. Sweet discussed:

- NY State Learning Standards and the connections to curriculum, instruction, assessments (state and local) and higher education expectations: while the state has a set of standards there is much that falls under local control, such as instruction in the classroom.
- State Standards Review Initiative Update: Conversations about standards are happening at both the state level (Board of Regents NYS update) and the national level (Common Core Standards). The State would like to hear from teachers regarding their best practices. The new Standards Review Committee would like input on curriculum framework and guidance. New York State is one of the 51 states and territories involved in the Common Core Standards Initiative (www.corestandards.org) happening at a national level. This is sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in partnership with Achieve, ACT and the College Board. The goal of the group is to develop college and career-readiness standards for ELA and mathematics.
- The Regents exam was designed to measure high school commencement-level standards rather than readiness for college.
- The Board of Regents approves learning standards (student achievement expectations) and provides state examinations. Local school districts develop curricula and approve coursework that will help students achieve the standards.
- The State provides various online resources to support ELA and literacy achievement:
 - CI &IT content pages (www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/)
 - Virtual Learning Systems (www.nysvls.org)

- The Board of Regents Standards Review Initiative began with ELA. During the revision of the ELA Learning Standards, current and draft ELA standards were reviewed by two groups: Achieve Inc. and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills.
- An ELA Panel was established to review several documents that focus on college readiness including Achieve's benchmarks (<http://www.achieve.org/node/958>) and the College Board Standards for College Success (<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/k-12/standards>).
- All material on the Standards Review Initiative is available (<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/standardsreview/>).

Discussion points:

- Some teachers believe that the Regents exam has become less challenging. The anchor papers are weaker and there is a greater emphasis on reading comprehension.
- Teachers may spend too much time teaching to the test. There is pressure for non-tenured teachers to show high student scores.
- Students have testing fatigue from too much testing.
- The exaggerated importance of the Regents gives students a false sense of assurance.
- There was a suggestion that the ELA Regents be pushed back to 10th grade and keep the anchor papers the same. Teachers could then teach writing skills in 11th and 12th grades.
- The 10th grade test could focus on basic writing and competency skills and have another test at the end of 12th grade. Why not up the bar with an exit exam in 12th grade?

Higher Education/Workforce Preparedness

- *Erik Sweet:* Schools need to prepare students for both higher education and careers. Writing for business, which now includes email and oral presentations, has changed over the years.
- SUNY Orange and MSMC instructors noted that incoming students have deficits in both sentence skills and research skills.
- *Erik Sweet:* One national standard is that students should be able to understand differences in source materials.

Literacy Across Content Areas

- Teachers and instructors discussed the need to hold students accountable for ELA skills across content areas.