Amherst Regional High School English Department

Heterogeneity Works
Context for Heterogeneity

Departmental Agreements

9th & 10th grade
Context for Heterogeneity

- 1989 – Observations about grouped classes & educational opportunity
- First mixed grouped classes (Journalism & American Literature)
- 1992 – NAACP lawsuit based on de-facto segregation in grouped classes
- School District – community response
- Departmental position embracing heterogeneity
- Support structures for change
- Resistance to change
Departmental Agreements
9th grade
English Language Arts

Writing & Literature A
12 weeks

Writing & Literature B
12 weeks

10th grade
English Language Arts

Literature as Social Criticism
12 weeks

Oral Communication
12 weeks

11th & 12th grade
English Language Arts

Literature:
Group A:
American Literature & Nature
Ancient & Medieval Lit & Philosophy
Bible & Related Lit
British & Irish Lit
Intro to Shakespeare
Renaissance & Modern Lit & Philosophy

Group B:
African-American Lit
American Lit & Society
Contemporary World Lit
Gay & Lesbian Lit
Modern & Contemporary Poetry
Women in Lit

Writing:
Creative Writing
Expository Writing
Journalism

Performance:
Argumentation & Debate
Drama

Reading Support Classes for Literature - Individualized Reading for ELL Support
Honors Option 9 - 12, AP Option 11 & 12 Literature only
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English Department Teachers

- leadership by consensus
- no departmental teaching hierarchy
- trust
- critical friends group
- mentoring of new dept members
- ongoing sharing among dept members
Accountability

- Self & students
- Department groups
- Administration, RBT & WMWP
- Reflection on student progress
9th grade curriculum

- Literature:
  - The Odyssey
  - Black Boy
  - A Raisin In The Sun
  - Romeo & Juliet

- Writing:
  - Night
  - The Bean Trees
  - Short Stories
  - Poetry

- Speaking & Listening:
  - The Odyssey
  - Black Boy
  - A Raisin In The Sun
  - Romeo & Juliet
10th grade curriculum

- Literature
  - Oedipus Rex
  - Othello
  - Their Eyes Were Watching God
  - Catcher In The Rye

- Writing

- Speaking & Listening

- Poetry Intensive
- Speeches

- All My Sons
- Ghosts
9th & 10th Grade Practices & Philosophies

- heterogeneous classes for all
- acculturate all students to rigorous departmental expectations
- privilege personal & imaginative writing
- teach analytical writing
- whole class discussions
- language of literary analysis
- close reading in class
9th & 10th Grade Practices & Philosophies

- expectation of success rather than failure
- teacher feedback to students is individualized
- differentiated instruction and assessment
- authentic praise
- inspire self-confidence
- prepare students for departmental elective system
Portfolio Assessment

Students assemble a collection of best revised writing.

Students write a reflection including: thoughtful attention to texts, assignments, and class activities; personal strengths and challenges in the class; and progress in language arts skills.
Challenges

• Little endorsement of heterogeneity by the school unless politically advantageous

• Increasing class size & decreasing support classes due to budget constraints & possible change to semesters

• Need more data to evaluate the disproportionality of male students of color on the D/F list
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