Brockton High School

Brockton, Massachusetts

“City of Champions”

Progress in English Language Arts

The Achievement Gap Initiative

At Harvard University

June, 2009
Brockton High School
Achieving Instructional Improvement &
Maintaining Instructional Quality

Embracing a Common Vision

Our Restructuring Goals:

To improve student academic achievement
- Core Academic Learning
- Stretch Learning
- Addressing the needs of Special Populations

1. To personalize the educational experience for every student
- Student Engagement
- Personal Skill Development
Essential Groups: Empowering Leadership Teams to Take Action and Innovate

- Restructuring Committee
  serves as our “think tank”
- Administrative Leadership Team
  has positional authority
- Data Analysis Team
  identifies areas in need of improvement
- Department Steering Committees
  examine and revise curriculum
Improving Student Academic Achievement: informing decisions through data analysis

Analyzed data to target needs
- Identified Core Learning

Developed Literacy Initiative
- Restructuring Committee identified essential literacy skills
- Literacy Charts posted in every classroom
- All teachers became teachers of reading, writing, speaking, and reasoning
Core Learning

LITERACY CHART: READING

- for content (both literal and inferential)
- to apply pre-reading, during reading and post-reading strategies to all reading assignments, including determining purpose and pre-learning vocabulary
- to research a topic
- to gather information
- to comprehend an argument
- to determine the main idea of a passage
- to understand a concept and construct meaning
- to expand one’s experiences

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Core Learning

LITERACY CHART: WRITING

- to take notes
- to explain one’s thinking
- to argue a thesis and support one’s thinking
- to compare and contrast
- to write an open response
- to describe an experiment, report one’s findings, and report one’s conclusion
- to generate a response to what one has read, viewed, or heard
- to convey one’s thinking in complete sentences
- to develop an expository essay with a formal structure

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Core Learning

LITERACY CHART: SPEAKING

- to convey one’s thinking in complete sentences
- to interpret a passage orally
- to debate an issue
- to participate in class discussion or a public forum
- to make an oral presentation to one’s class, one’s peers, one’s community
- to present one’s portfolio
- to respond to what one has read, viewed, or heard
- to communicate in a manner that allows one to be both heard and understood

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- to create, interpret and explain a table, chart or graph
- to compute, interpret and explain numbers
- to read, break down, and solve a word problem
- to interpret and present statistics that support an argument or hypothesis
- to identify a pattern, explain a pattern, and/or make a prediction based on a pattern
- to detect the fallacy in an argument or a proof
- to explain the logic of an argument or solution
- to use analogies and/or evidence to support one’s thinking
- to explain and/or interpret relationships of space and time
Engaging the faculty

- Interdisciplinary workshops with faculty leaders
- Interdisciplinary small group discussions
- Department workshops
- Full faculty meetings
- Key groups
Our Professional Development Model: Adopting Effective Instructional Practices

- Identify literacy area of focus
- Develop workshop scripts
- Train the trainer
- Conduct Interdisciplinary and Department Workshops
- Implement literacy skills in the classroom
- Follow-up and monitor
Monitoring: What gets monitored is what gets done

- Associate Principal develops calendar of Implementation
- Faculty uses common assessment rubrics
- Department Heads assist teachers, collect samples of student work and provide feedback
- Associate Principal collects department samples, assesses, and provides feedback to department heads
Professional Development
Literacy Workshops

- Open Response - Revised with new rubric to reflect stretch learning
- Graphing - Revised to reflect stretch learning
- Teaching Multiple Choice Strategies
- Using Visuals to Preview a Chapter
- Previewing the Table of Contents
- Speaking Skills – Graded Discussions
- Oral Presentation Rubric
- Vocabulary in Context
- Thinking About Words
- Non-Fiction Reading Strategies
- ELL Training
- School-wide active reading strategies
- Summarizing
- Assessment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>FORM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Response contains a clear thesis and insightfully answers all parts of the question.</td>
<td>- Response contains sophisticated and effective use of transitions and strategic repetition indicating complete control of the material.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Response provides relevant and specific textual evidence.</td>
<td>- Response is logically and effectively organized in its thesis, paragraphing, and sequencing of examples.</td>
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<td>- Explanations of evidence are clear and accurate, and demonstrate superior understanding of the material.</td>
<td>- Response contains clear sentence structure with few or no errors.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Response contains a clear thesis and adequately answers all parts of the question.</td>
<td>- Response contains adequate but simplistic use of transitions and strategic repetition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Response provides relevant but general textual evidence.</td>
<td>- Response is organized in its thesis, paragraphing, and sequencing of examples.</td>
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<td>- Explanations of evidence are mostly clear and accurate, and demonstrate good understanding of the material.</td>
<td>- Response contains clear sentence structure with no distracting errors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Response contains a thesis but only partially answers the question.</td>
<td>- Response contains some inappropriate use of transitions and strategic repetition.</td>
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<td>- Response provides a mix of accurate and inaccurate textual evidence.</td>
<td>- Response demonstrates lapses in the organization of its thesis, paragraphing, and/or sequencing of examples.</td>
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<td>- Explanations of evidence are vague and/or demonstrate limited understanding of the material.</td>
<td>- Response contains lapses in sentence structure that interfere with the clarity of thought.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Response contains a thesis but only minimally answers the question.</td>
<td>- Response contains incorrect or inadequate use of transitions and strategic repetition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Response provides insufficient and/or largely inaccurate textual evidence.</td>
<td>- Response reflects minimal organization of its thesis, paragraphing, and/or sequencing of examples.</td>
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<td>- Explanations of evidence are unclear and/or demonstrate minimal understanding of the material.</td>
<td>- Response contains major errors in sentence structure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Response is incorrect.</td>
<td>- Response contains no evidence of transitions and strategic repetition.</td>
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<td>- Response contains insufficient evidence to show understanding of the material.</td>
<td>- Response reflects no organization.</td>
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<td>- Response is off-topic and/or contains irrelevant content.</td>
<td>- Response contains little to no evidence of sentence structure.</td>
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**Evaluated by:** Self, Peer, Teacher (Circle One)  
**SCORING:** 13-14 = Advanced  
11-12 = Proficient  
8-10 = Needs Improvement  
0-7 = Failing
Active Reading Strategies

1. Read the question.

2. a. Circle key direction verbs.
   - For example – write, draw, explain, compare, show, copy
   b. Underline important information.
   - Often there is information in a question that is irrelevant to finding the answer.

3. In your own words, write what the question is asking you to do.

4. Develop your plan/Answer the question.
Hard Work, Hard Work, Hard Work

Consistency and Tenacity

- Clear and consistent focus:
  - School-wide Literacy Initiative -
  - Non-negotiable skills that ALL students must master – no exceptions
- New teachers trained in all previous literacy workshops
- Safety nets and interventions for struggling learners
SAME STANDARDS, SAME CURRICULUM, DIFFERENT APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION

Addressing needs of special populations:
Special Education students and English Language Learners

- **Inclusion**
  - Provides specialized instruction as part of an inclusive model (co-teaching) within regular education classes

- **Sheltered English Immersion**
  - Provides specialized instruction focused on language acquisition while maintaining rigorous standards
What Gets Monitored Is What Gets Done

Evaluation structure:
- Formal
- Informal
- Common evaluation standards
- Common vocabulary
- Common process
ANALYSIS: TRANSLATING IT INTO WRITING

CLAIM
a statement that a teacher performs a certain teaching skill or carries out a certain pattern in his or her instruction (thus, a generalization).

He makes a point of coming back to students who are confused. She communicated standards for quality and quantity of work in several ways.

EVIDENCE
a quote or literal description of something said or done.

“I don’t want to drop you just yet, Maria. What would be the next step?” Pointing to the list on the board, she said, “Now remember, you need to give five different ways he solved his problem. And, they need to be in the correct sequence.”

INTERPRETATION
a statement of what the behavior accomplished or intended to accomplish, what was significant about it, and its effect on students.

Thus Maria had a chance to say what she understood in her own words and not just be passive. Thus students knew exactly what good work should look like.

JUDGMENT
a sentence, phrase, or adjective that lets the reader know what the writer thought of the behavior.

This pattern of persevering and returning is particularly helpful for students who are struggling. She did an admirable job of establishing conditions for success.
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<td>2. Shows evidence of planning and organization of teaching activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>The class agenda and literacy objectives were clearly posted on the white board and articulated to students. “We are also going to be writing in our reflection journals that will be collected next class.” It was unclear what the objective of the class was. Scenic Design content objectives that outline what you want a student to know and be able to do as a result of the lesson or activity should be posted and be clearly articulated to your students. Requirements for a particular project including due dates and the assignment criteria must be conveyed both verbally and in writing</td>
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<td>7. Maintains effective rapport with students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>You pulled Marquis aside on a couple of occasions in an attempt to get him working. “What are we going to be able to do to help you get this project done Marquis? How can I help you because you do not seem to be working during class?” These personal interactions are important in getting students to focus on their work.</td>
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Students were asked to take out homework, it wasn’t evident that xxx stopped to ensure that all students had completed their homework. “Take out your homework and have a seat. Ladies, take a seat please. Take a seat and take out your homework. Take out your homework. I asked multiple times to take out the homework. We are going over it.” XXX simply read each question out loud and students offered their one word answers. Students were allowed to grade their own paper. There was no mention of accountability.
Changing Attitudes:

- **Everyone** is responsible for every student
- Believing that every student **CAN** and **MUST**
- Our responsibility: to figure out how to help
We always look in the mirror:

- WHAT are we teaching?
- HOW are we teaching it?
- HOW do we know our students are learning it?