

Blue Ridge Middle School (BRMS)  
Heterogeneous Grouping Steering Committee  
Meeting Minutes



**Date:** August 22, 2012

*We believe* the purpose of implementing heterogeneous class methodologies in English 8 is to produce increased levels of achievement for all learners and enhance the positive climate of English 8 classrooms at Blue Ridge Middle School.

**Members present:** Matt Bolen, BRMS Assistant Principal - Chairman; Brion Bell, BRMS Principal; Karin Nixon, BRMS 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Dean; Allyson White, BRMS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade English Teacher/Subject Area Lead Teacher (SALT); and Theresa Rosette, BRMS Parent and current PTO President

**Members not present:** Karen Dillon, past BRMS PTO President and Pat Kinney, PhD., Consultant, former Adjunct Professor at the University of Maryland and former Director of the National Child Care Center

**About the committee:** All committee positions are currently filled. Committee meetings take place monthly and all meeting minutes will be posted on the Heterogeneous Classes page of the BRMS website. To contact a committee member, please email or call the school at 540-751-2520 or use the "Contact Information" link on the Heterogeneous Classes page of the BRMS website.

Agenda Item:	Notes:
Purpose of the Committee	<p>The purpose of this committee is to study the implementation of heterogeneous class methodologies in English 8 during the 2012-2013 school year and to create a framework that facilitates communication, measurement, and consistent procedures and processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communication:</b> provide clear explanations of rationales and processes as well as address community concerns/questions</li> <li>• <b>Measurement:</b> define and evaluate measures to provide evidence of growth in all levels of learners</li> <li>• <b>Consistent procedures and processes:</b> define and evaluate the teacher- and school-level procedures to ensure consistent practices across classrooms</li> </ul>
Committee Member Roles	<p><b>Matt Bolen, Chairman:</b> facilitates the meeting of the steering committee by setting meetings, coordinating and dispersing agenda, serving as a point of contact, and distributing minutes</p> <p><b>Brion Bell, School Liaison:</b> serves as a liaison between BRMS, LCPS School Board Members and LCPS Senior Staff; allocates resources as needed to support the program</p> <p><b>Karen Dillon &amp; Theresa Rosette, Community Liaisons:</b> present community questions and concerns to the committee and provide information from the committee to the community</p> <p><b>Pat Kinney, Consultant:</b> provides expert opinions/advise to the committee as a non-biased party</p> <p><b>Allyson White &amp; Karin Nixon Faculty Members:</b> trained teachers in the area of differentiated instruction who have experience teaching heterogeneous classes</p>

<p><b>Parent/Community Input (Communication)</b></p>	<p>Concerns expressed by community during the 2011-2012 school year:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.) <i>Pacing is slower</i> in mixed ability classrooms because academic level students slow down the delivery of content &amp; conversation.</li><li>2.) Mixed ability classes are <i>less rigorous</i> than pure honors classes.</li><li>3.) There are social concerns of <i>academic bullying</i> on both levels - academic level students by honors levels students and vice -versa.</li><li>4.) Honors students are tasked with teaching the academic students.</li><li>5.) <i>Classroom management &amp; climate negatively</i> impacted by mixed ability groups.</li><li>6.) <i>The quality of teacher instruction decreases</i> when there is a wide-range of student abilities; quality instruction is <i>difficult to sustain</i>.</li><li>7.) There is a <i>lack of communication</i> on the part of the school to the community about the program; a forum for concerns is not available.</li><li>8.) <i>Unclear data</i> as to how teachers know that <b>all</b> students are achieving.</li><li>9.) A clear explanation of the role that SOLs play in the planning of curriculum is necessary. (Do SOLs limit the depth of instruction?)</li><li>10.) Clear explanations of how all students benefit from this type of program, specifically for honors level students.</li><li>11.) Lack of motivation on the part of the honors students is a concern because academic students may receive the same grade but do seemingly easier/less work.</li></ol>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Components of English 8 Heterogeneous Instruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 8<sup>th</sup> grade English program is based on reading and writing workshop.</li> <li>• The hallmarks of workshop include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ student choice in work both in class &amp; at home</li> <li>○ teacher serves as a "coach"</li> <li>○ typical lesson consists of a 6-15 minute whole-class mini-lesson on a topic chosen from the LCPS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade English Curriculum followed by independent work which allows the teacher time to confer with students individually (usually) or in small groups (when needed)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Rigor is maintained by offering assignment options to challenge kids. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In reading, thinking skills and strategies are taught to all students although they are using different levels of text.</li> <li>○ In writing, there is a choice in writing topics offered at different levels .</li> <li>○ Minimum of three different levels with most major assignments: grade level (academic), honors, and "above and beyond" for the highly able and motivated student</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Assessments to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ portfolios to show student growth over the course of a year</li> <li>○ common rubrics for assignments that measure students' skill sets</li> <li>○ Rubrics/ assignments that increase in complexity/ depth over the year. (For example, a top score on a September rubric might be a second-tier score on a December rubric.)</li> <li>○ diagnostic writing tests based on SAT-style prompts that will include pre- and post- assessments to measure success of the program; SAT rubric will be used due to its increased sensitivity at the higher level (as compared to VA 8<sup>th</sup>/ 11<sup>th</sup> grade writing rubrics)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">Next Meeting</p>	<p>The next meeting date will be set by September 14, 2012 and will occur between October 10<sup>th</sup> and October 22, 2012.</p>