

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



Date: November 1, 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 7th Grade Dean; Allyson White, BRMS 8th Grade English Teacher/Subject Area Lead Teacher (SALT); : Pat Kinney, PhD., Consultant, former Adjunct Professor at the University of Maryland and former Director of the National Child Care Center; and Karen Dillon, past BRMS PTO President

Members absent: Theresa Rosette, BRMS Parent and current PTO President

Agenda Item:	Notes:
Community Questions & Comments	Mrs. Dillon reports no new questions/comments.
Benchmark Writing Diagnostic Exemplars	<p>Three exemplar essays with various scores (2, 3 and 5) when graded using the BRMS writing rubric were presented and the explanation of each score was explained by Mrs. White.</p> <p>Note: A score of 3 is considered to be grade-level for the beginning of year.</p> <p>Essay 1: Overall score of 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scant in content • Problems with mechanics • Lacks support and detail • Some developing control • Errors detract from meaning • Elements present: organization, paragraphs, and tries to compare two concepts <p>Essay 2: Overall score of 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to develop some support but vague (no concrete examples) • Intro and conclusion present but perfunctory not sophisticated • Some development of argument present • Glimmers of voice • Conclusion repeats introduction

<p>Benchmark Diagnostic Exemplars Continued</p>	<p>Essay 3: Overall score of 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific examples and critical thinking being developed • Demonstrates strong level of control • Errors in usage and mechanics are only present when attempting difficult sentences structure and/or punctuation • Voice is present <p>Measures of students' development are based on not only the Benchmark Writing diagnostic, but also student writing portfolios.</p> <p>Mrs. White:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay that was scored a 2 uses semi-colon correctly - directly applying instruction that has been given despite many other mechanical errors. This skill was based on a whole-class mini-lesson that was presented to all students. It is a higher level punctuation skill. • SOL format is changing this year: Students will be writing to one of 40 prompts that will be released in advance rather than an unknown prompt. <p>Dr. Kinney:</p> <p>One of the most profound ideas is in essay #1; well-developed idea. The thinking is present just needs mechanics. This student could have a lot to offer all in cooperative groupings. He could teach someone who is a more developed writer. This supports the idea of heterogeneous classes.</p>
<p>Formal Writing # 2 Discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scored only for written expression (outlined in rubric) Honors had a +1 rubric in area of written expression which is consistent with the Program of Studies; it provides increased rigor over the academic • Prose not poetry in any genre that have been covered this year in class - student selects genre • Teacher conference is part of the process • Students identify one thing he/she is doing well (metacognition) & one area where help is needed (teacher works with student to build this area) • Editing is part of the process • In addition to the formal writing, students are required to write a reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two versions of reflection (differentiated) ○ Above and beyond reflection also offered—required analysis of another author's written expression ○ Academic has more scaffolding, less writing than the honors version ○ Academic is given hand-selected students

	<p>Observations by Mrs. White:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Almost all students wrote on the 3, 4, and 5 level for written expression (grade-level or above) - Students dialing in to their own writing through the metacognitive aspects of the assignments - One student attempted the above and beyond on this assignment - generally 3-5 students attempt on a typical assignment <p>Question from Mrs. Dillon: How do students at different levels benefit when not writing to the same prompt?</p> <p>Response from Mrs. White: Conferencing is the key. Whole class mini-lessons are delivered. Students work on the same skills at different levels.</p> <p>Mrs. Dillon voiced that students need to be prepared for on-line classes. Students need to be able to write. We want to make sure that all are being challenged.</p> <p>Mr. Bell stated that the committee is going to work through concerns and continue to dial up the curriculum to meet the needs of all students.</p> <p>Dr. Kinney stated that one area that the discussion has not focused on is the social - side: high social (could be a student scoring a 2) and low socials (could be a student scoring a 5) - social dynamics come in to play. Research out of University of Maryland shows that cooperative learning has many benefits. The committee is only looking at the academic/instructional side but social dynamics are important.</p> <p>Mr. Bolen mentioned 21st century skills - collaboration plays a huge role; schools need to provide instruction to push and challenge all levels.</p>
Website Update	Tabled until the next meeting.
Next Meeting	<p>Tentative Date: Thursday, December 13 at 10:30</p> <p>Goal: Discuss and address specific questions/concerns generated at the 8/22/12 steering committee meeting.</p>