

Special Progress Report

Coventry High School

December 1, 2009

1. Update the Commission on the extent of the completion of the development of the school's curriculum documents across all curricular areas

Classification: *Completed*

In January 2009, we made our on-line curriculum available to the public and hosted a curriculum unveiling night. Directions to view our on-line curriculum can be found at <http://www.coventryps.org/admin/ABC.html>. The Coventry High School curriculum of one hundred thirty courses includes unit titles and introductions, timelines, and significant tasks. The significant tasks are linked to standards, contain instructional strategies, and are assessed with school-wide rubrics. Every curricular area has complete curriculum of the core courses. While the curriculum is complete for many elective courses, curriculum writing is in process for other elective courses and new courses. We have designated five faculty meetings during the 2009-2010 school year for faculty to finish these courses and to update existing course curricula. In addition to documenting course curricula, we have articulated the functions of our support services, school counseling, social and psychological counseling, using the on-line *A Balanced Curriculum* template. The on-line curriculum allows parents to stay informed about what their students are learning. In addition to viewing our curriculum on-line, parents can check their student's progress in the curriculum by checking our on-line gradebook.

2. Design a formal process to ensure ongoing curriculum articulation with the sending schools in the district, building upon the ad hoc practice of bringing the middle and high school departments and faculties together as part of the process of developing curriculum

Classification: *Completed*

This is the third school year in which we schedule and hold joint faculty meetings with the middle school. These meetings, which occur at least 3 times per school year, have evolved into vertical team meetings in which curriculum alignment in all disciplines is ensured and effective instructional strategies and assessment practices are discussed. These collaborative meetings also fulfill our commitment to the five-year Project Opening Doors grant, through the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, which includes vertical team meetings that ensure curriculum and instruction is adequately preparing students with the prerequisite skills and knowledge needed for the college-level rigor of our recently expanded Advanced Placement program. In addition, our teachers work with teachers in the grammar school and intermediate school at least once during each school year to ensure a logical coordination of curriculum from one school to the next. On November 4, 2008, we had a district-wide staff development day to coordinate curriculum K-12 in several areas. On November 3, 2009, the following K-12 curriculum committees worked on curriculum alignment: mathematics, health, special education, and music. All other departments worked on aligning the curriculum to CT State standards. The work during these meetings is guided by our district wide curriculum team which meets monthly and examines our K-12 on-line curriculum to identify areas in need of attention.

December 1, 2009

Page Two

The common daily schedule of Coventry High School and Capt. Nathan Hale Middle School has enabled us to share staff in the areas of Mathematics, World Language, Music, Health, and Technology, resulting in increased curriculum coordination with the middle school.

In addition, the principals from the high school, middle school, and intermediate school prepared and presented a standardized test score report to the Board of Education for the past two years. This involved analyzing performance data to identify areas of strength and weakness as well as deciding on plans for improvement.

- 3. Assess the extent to which instructional strategies practiced across the school personalize instruction, make connections across disciplines, engage students active learners, involve all students in higher order thinking to promote depth of understanding, provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills, and promote student self-assessment and self-reflection**

Classification: *Completed*

Our process for examining student work includes collegial discussion on all of these instructional areas. (Please see our response to recommendation #8.) As noted in that response, we discovered that instruction in classrooms provides students with ample opportunities in all of the above areas. However, two of these areas, “make connections across disciplines” and “promote student self-assessment and self-reflection” were less frequently represented in our analysis of the curriculum and examination of student work. While we are working to ensure that these areas become an even more regular part of classroom practice, students also self-reflect and assess as well as make interdisciplinary connections in their electronic portfolio graduation requirement.

In addition to our analysis of student work, we are collecting instructional strategy data during classroom visits. Our feedback form includes the following:

- Clarity of Learning Expectations
- Personalized Instruction
- Engagement as Active Learners
- Higher Order Thinking/Depth of Understanding
- Interdisciplinary Connections
- Assessment (use of school-wide rubrics)
- Student Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection

The principal and assistant principal conduct 10-15 minute unannounced classroom visits and leave a feedback form with the teacher and then log the observations on a spreadsheet. In order for an instructional area to be noted on the feedback form and included on the spreadsheet it must have been observed to a significant degree, as determined by the administrators in consultation with the department chairs. The results of each month are shared with the faculty and include the frequency of each area in the school overall.

December 1, 2009

Page Three

4. Report on the school's progress in providing common planning time to accommodate interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly as any such provision was affected by the redesign of the school schedule

Classification: *Completed*

One of our goals this school year is to embed the skills of reading, writing, and calculating in all courses and the new schedule has opened up planning opportunities to facilitate planning among teachers. Teachers now have six planning periods per week, rather than the previous four planning periods. Department chairs actually have 12 planning periods per week, rather than the previous eight. In planning for the implementation of the new eight-period schedule, department chairs were asked to identify areas in which common planning time would facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration. These requests for common planning time were honored when possible. As requested, the tenth-grade English teachers have common planning time with the social studies teachers who teach the tenth-grade course World Understanding. In addition, two of our freshman English teachers have common planning time with two of our freshmen science teachers, allowing for productive discussions on integrating literacy into the science curriculum. We were able to schedule common planning time for our two AP Literature teachers. Also, we were able to schedule two courses that work together, in the same period. These courses are the Introduction to American Culture course in the English department and the Advanced American Cultures course in the Social Studies department. The first course teaches journalism concepts and the second course expands news reporting to video production. Another recent example of interdisciplinary collaboration is our Civics class in the Social Studies department and the Environmental Studies activities of our Science department that resulted in the elimination of the Styrofoam trays in the high school cafeteria. We will continue to look for opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and schedule classes to facilitate its success.

Our new schedule has allowed increased flexibility in scheduling courses. More students have been able to get into their course choices this year than in past years. All teacher requests for courses were also honored. Many students have utilized the additional period in the schedule to take an additional elective course, on-line class or to conduct independent studies. Additionally, many students are using the extra time to serve as tutors in the tutoring center, teachers' aides, office aides, or computer lab tech assistants.

December 1, 2009

Page Four

5. Provide a summary of professional development activities focused specifically on the expansion of the use of “best practices” in instruction

Classification: *Completed*

Our involvement in the Project Opening Doors grant through the Connecticut Business and Industry Association has provided several training opportunities for staff members in the areas of English, Mathematics, and Science. Teachers of advanced placement courses and pre-AP courses have been trained on instructional strategies during week-long summer sessions to ensure skill development and knowledge acquisition of students preparing for or participating in college level courses. Both in fall 2008 and fall 2009, several of our faculty attended the New England Regional Forum sponsored by the College Board. The 2008 Forum focused on Differentiated Instruction in Advanced Placement courses. Also, several of our math, science, and English teachers participated in and instructed at inter-district AP study sessions allowing them to interact with students and teachers from other high schools.

Last year, our English department chair was trained in the program called *Laying the Foundation* and then extended her professional development to become a certified trainer. This year we are sending another English teacher and a science teacher to four full days of training on these instructional support materials.

In January 2009, Heidi Hayes Jacobs presented a workshop for all teachers on instructional strategies to integrate literacy across the curriculum.

On March 27, 2009, the Coventry High School Staff focused on improving instruction in order to increase student learning. Each staff member, whether classroom teacher or support personnel, answered the essential question “What can I do differently to increase student learning? We started the day with an overview of effective instructional practices and set the stage for our work on Response to Intervention (RTI). Morning break-out sessions focused on different aspects of instruction including student motivation and personalization, interdisciplinary collaboration, classroom management and lesson structure, and student self-assessment and self-reflection. Staff participated in two of these four discussions. A Transition Program Refinement Team met to design more effective instructional arrangements and supports for our Transition Program. In the afternoon, all faculty members participated in two of the following workshops: Lost at School book talk, Technology Integration, and Learning Strategies. Several (19) staff read Lost at School, which offers a technique of helping students change future behavior by helping students identify alternative responses. The Technology Integration workshop, team-facilitated by two students and their teacher, provided examples with clear directions of how to incorporate some of the latest advancements into the classroom. The Learning Strategies workshop allowed us to make significant progress in identifying our RTI Tier I interventions, ensuring widespread use of differentiated instruction and proactive corrective measures. At the end of the day, every staff member committed to a plan to enhance instruction in one or more of the following areas: Technology, Motivation and Personalization, Learning Interventions, Classroom Management, Interdisciplinary, Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection.

At our April 20, 2009, Faculty Meeting staff shared their progress on their instructional goals.

December 1, 2009

Page Five

On August 28, 2009, Neila Connors, Ph. D., presented a workshop on responsive educational environments which included responsive instructional strategies.

During the past two years, our School Counselors received training on using PSAT data to identify students who may be successful in advance placement courses.

Our efforts in designing our RTI plan have included a heavy focus on quality core instruction in the classrooms. This fall we created and implemented an intervention log for teachers to track the success of particular instructional strategies with students who are not progressing. In addition, we are currently designing a system for universal screening of all students in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. We are integrating several interventions, traditionally used for students who have individual education plans, in our classrooms as well as in our new tutoring center.

In October 2009, we sent a team of three regular education teachers, a special education teacher and an administrator to a *Positive Behavioral Supports* Workshop.

On October 14, 2009 one of our English teachers presented to the faculty on Writing Across the Curriculum, sharing her summer training from the University of Connecticut.

Our process of examining student work and the vertical team meetings with the middle school, include discussions on “best practices” in instruction. We are currently planning a staff development day for January 15, 2010, on effective discipline-specific instructional strategies.

December 1, 2009

Page Six

6. Assess the degree and frequency of the use of the school-wide rubrics by teachers in those courses that have assumed responsibility for the various academic expectations in the mission

Classification: *Completed*

While some departments have assumed responsibility for certain academic expectations for student learning, all teachers are incorporating multiple academic, civic, and social expectations in their courses. In order to accomplish this, teachers are merging more than one school-wide rubric, and adding in civic and social components, in order to create specific expectations for the course or particular assignments. This process of combining and enhancing rubrics is efficiently accomplished using a spreadsheet created by one of our teachers.

At department meetings, teachers share and discuss student work using our rubric for examining student work. Each teacher shares two pieces of student work, which has been assessed with a school-wide rubric or rubric derived from school-wide rubrics, per year. This work is then collected and evaluated on the degree of opportunity that students had to meet all expectations for student learning. The analyzed student work is compiled into our evidence binder.

Analysis of our student work collection revealed that students have ample opportunity to meet all academic expectations for student learning at Coventry High School. The most frequently represented expectation was effective communication and the least common was artistic expression. Teachers are making efforts to increase the incorporation of artistic expression into student work expectations when appropriate. Our data compilation also showed that teachers are integrating the civic and social expectations for student learning into their rubrics for specific assignments. The expectations of personal choices and decision making, and to be an aware, contributing, and responsible citizen were commonly included, while the expectations of teamwork and leadership, and respect for individual differences are less frequently embedded in course work.

In addition to our system of examining and collecting student work, the teacher evaluation cycle allows for discussion of school-wide rubric implementation. Our post-observation conference includes the teacher sharing student work resulting from the lesson. That work must have been assessed with a school-wide rubric or rubric derived from school-wide rubrics.

Further evidence of students meeting all of our expectations for student learning defined on our school-wide rubrics is obvious in our electronic portfolio graduation requirement. Students must include their best work and reflect on how it demonstrates that they have met all the expectations for student learning.

December 1, 2009

Page Seven

7. Develop and maintain a process that provides formal opportunities for teachers to meet collaboratively to discuss and share student work and the results of student assessments for the purposes of revising curriculum and improving instructional strategies

Classification: *Completed*

Student work is examined during monthly departmental meetings using our rubric for examining student work. The rubric includes components of curriculum, instruction and assessment, and asks teachers to make suggestions for curricula and instructional adjustments. Each piece of student work that is presented must have been assessed using a school-wide rubric or rubric derived from school-wide rubrics. Each teacher must present at least two samples of student work to the other teachers in their departments each year. Departments submit copies of the student work, the corresponding school-wide rubric, and the significant task description from the curriculum, to an evidence binder. This evidence binder includes work from all departments and is analyzed for the frequency of opportunities that students have to meet all the expectations for student learning. We are currently in our third year of analyzing and collecting student work under this process. In addition, the teacher observation phase of the teacher evaluation cycle now includes the sharing of student work, with an administrator, during a post-observation conference. The student work is the basis of the conference conversation on how to improve instruction or change the curriculum.

8. Summarize the findings gleaned from the analysis of student work and curriculum documents in the department meetings

Classification: *Completed*

Our analysis of student work has been an important step leading to on-going curriculum revisions. Our rubric for examining student work includes the following areas:

- Clearly part of the curriculum and is included on the balanced curriculum website
- Depth of understanding is emphasized over breadth of coverage
- Engages students in inquiry, problem solving, and/or higher order thinking
- Opportunity for authentic (real world) application of knowledge and skills
- Engages students as active and self-directed learners
- Promotes student self-assessment and self-reflection
- Makes connections across disciplines
- Student work clearly assessed using the expectations for student learning
- Feedback to students about progress in meeting expectations for student learning
- Feedback to students about progress in meeting specific course expectations

During monthly departmental meetings, teachers examine student work for evidence of the above criteria and make recommendations for revising the curriculum, including changing instructional strategies and adding intervention or enrichment activities. Analysis of student work in these departmental meetings indicates that teachers are using instructional strategies that personalize instruction, make connections across disciplines, engage students as active learners, involve all students in higher order thinking to promote depth of understanding,

December 1, 2009

Page Eight

provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills, and promote student self-assessment and self-reflection. However, two of these areas, “make connections across disciplines” and “promote student self-assessment and self-reflection”, are less common and are a focus for greater integration into classroom instruction.

When examining student work in departments, teachers included ideas on improving instruction or the curriculum. Please see the following examples:

- “Provide an alternative to students to create a digital story board in place of a physical collage.”
- “Provide a list of pre-approved countries which will ‘work’ for this assignment.”
- “Reflection on how roles fit into greater society”
- “Increase frequency of feedback”
- “Ask students to create theme statements rather than choose a thematic phrase or word”
- “Might be done in a small group rather than individually”
- “Model constructive criticism for students so that when they meet for peer conferences the feedback is meaningful”
- “Next time when students hand in the assignment they will hand in a rubric with their own assessment”
- “Structure the choice of topics more and give students more choice of topics”
- “Written reflection”
- “Students can keep a personal journal”
- “Have students create webquests on the topic”
- “Research related topics in current events”
- “Upon returning the graded assignment, have students write a reflection essay on what they could have done differently and why” (math)
- “Include a self assessment” (math)
- “Include goal setting and reflection in significant task”
- “Could load reinforcement on computer and complete automated exercise”
- “Include MLA format for the report”
- “Project could be revised to be less time consuming”
- “Newspaper articles that reflect large vs. small government”

December 1, 2009

Page Nine

9. Develop a process to ensure effective and consistent monitoring of chemical hygiene practices as outlined in the newly developed chemical hygiene plan

Classification: *Completed*

Our process in ensuring effective and consistent monitoring of chemical hygiene practices is largely described in the responsibilities of our chemical hygiene officer as follows. The district is funding this stipend position which has been filled by a high school science teacher.

Chemical Hygiene Officer (CHO) Job Description

1. Manages the hazardous chemical program including the oversight and approval of chemical purchases, up-to-date inventory, organization of Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), proper storage, functioning of engineering control (ventilation, eyewash, shower, master shut-off, extinguishers, etc.), occupancy loads, correct chemical labeling, safe use and appropriate disposal.
2. Collect lab safety acknowledgement forms of students from teachers annually and retain records for seven years.
3. Ensure that science teachers are trained and prepared for appropriate chemical use and emergencies: participate in the investigation and corrective recommendations of various accidents involving chemical and physical hazards; files reports with administration.
4. Manages the Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP); conducts and reviews inspections of labs, prep rooms and storerooms, safety audits, and sampling reports to ensure analytical data correctness; ensures compliance with current Federal, state, and local regulation, including file maintenance for documents, permits, reports, logs (eyewash, showers, fume hoods, spill kits), etc.
5. Develops and administers various laboratory safety and related regulatory compliance training programs for school science faculty and students; enforces the utilization of all personal protective equipment (gloves, chemical splash goggles, safety glasses, aprons, etc.); ensures compliance with various acts and ordinances; updates plans and other safety information annually; develops policies and programs in chemical safety; provides for appropriate surveillance and testing.
6. Maintains thorough knowledge of regulations, and interprets standards, codes, and regulations issued by various governmental bodies; implements programs/policies to maintain compliance and assesses effectiveness; serves as a resource person for chemical safety and health information to all school science employees; represents the science department on various health and safety related committees; performs other duties as required.
7. Under the advisement of the CHO, the building principals will issue verbal and/or written warnings or other disciplinary actions as appropriate regarding safety violations by employees/students as necessary. The CHO, along with the Superintendent, and building principals will enforce the CHP as necessary.

December 1, 2009

Page Ten

We believe that our special progress report provides ample evidence that we have satisfied all seven highlighted recommendations which were made in response to our two-year report.

Follow-Up Committee Chair

Date

Principal

Date