

The School Improvement Plan

Boylan Catholic High School
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Sr. M. Anthony Marelli, O.P.

Steering Committee:

Dennis Hiemenz, Assistant Principal
Mary Gavan, Assistant Principal
Carol Davies, English Department Chairperson

External Review Team:

Mr. John Milroy, Chairperson
Rev. F. William Etheredge
Dr. Don Farrimond
March 4, 2005

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Performance Goal #1 Team Members:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Department</u>
Penny Yurkew	English
Gerry Davies	Mathematics
Sarah Sreenan	English
Linda Schmitt	Mathematics
Larry McPheron	Science
Chris Fridlund	Social Studies

Student Performance Goal # 1.

All students will improve their written expression across the curriculum.

Supporting Data for Goal # 1.

Student, parent and teacher survey results.
Teaching and Learning Techniques Survey.
P.L.A.N sub scores.

Although the PLAN test results indicate that most of our students do well, comparatively speaking, on the English portion, there is always room for improvement. The results of the surveys of our parents, students and teachers indicate that although we receive relatively high marks for our current program, approximately 48% of our parents, 49% of our students and 40% of our teachers gave us a grade of “B” or lower in evaluating our students writing skills’ curriculum. In light of the fact that 74% of our teachers report that they require writing in its various forms 20% or less of the time and 35% report that they require no writing at all, it appears the need for a concerted effort to provide additional writing across the curriculum is warranted.

Anecdotal information gleaned from teachers indicates that:

- Inconsistent standards of style exist within the school.
- Students need practice in writing to a prompt with a time limitation and in a variety of situations.
- A growing focus on writing is evident in standardized tests specifically the ACT and the SAT.
- A need exists to globally improve writing in both content and style in a variety of situations.
- Students need practice in transferring appropriate writing forms across the curriculum.

Intervention:

Teachers will incorporate writing strategies as an integral part of their course work.

Students will apply these strategies across the curriculum.

Research:

The Illinois Learning Standards cite three goals for English Language Arts students:

- A. Use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization and structure.
 1. In early high school
 - a. Use standard English to edit documents for clarity, agreement, proofread for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation
 - b. Insure that documents are formatted in final form for submission and/or publication
 2. In late high school – Produce grammatically correct documents using standard manuscript specifications for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- B. Compose well-organized and coherent writing for specific purposes and audiences.
 1. In early high school
 - a. Produce documents that exhibit a range of writing techniques appropriate to purpose and audience, with clarity of focus, logic of organization, appropriate elaboration and support and overall coherence.
 - b. Produce, edit, revise and format work for submission and/or publication.
 - c. Evaluate written work for its effectiveness and make recommendations for its improvement.
 2. In late high school
 - a. Using contemporary technology, produce documents of publication quality for specific purposes and audiences
 - b. Exhibit clarity of focus, logic of organization, appropriate elaboration and support and overall coherence
- C. Communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purposes
 1. In early high school
 - a. Write for real or potentially real situations in academic, professional and civic contexts.
 - b. Using available technology, produce compositions and multimedia works for specified audiences
 2. In late high school

- a. Communicate information and ideas in narrative, informative and persuasive writing with clarity and effectiveness in a variety of written forms using appropriate traditional and/or electronic formats; adapt content, vocabulary, voice, and tone to the audience, purpose and situation.
- b. Write for real or potentially real situations in academic, professional and civic contexts

Other References: (see appendix)

Boss, Suzie. Permanent Ink. Northwest Education. January 30, 2003.

Smith, Carl B. Writing instruction: changing views over the years. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading English and Communication Bloomington, IN, 2000.

Assessments:

Standardized assessment:

A practice exam from the College Board (PSAT) Section 5, “Writing Skills” will be administered to members of the freshman class. Raw scores will be recorded and compared with the raw scores earned by the same class when they take the PSAT in their junior year.

An average of the results from the previous five years of juniors’ scores on the PSAT will be used as a basis of comparison to compute the effect of the intervention and activities.

Local assessments:

Electronic Portfolio: Each student would create an electronic portfolio containing samples of writing from different disciplines. Compositions would exhibit a variety of composition modes over the course of the students’ high school career.

Writing Rubrics: A standard school rubric would be used to guide teachers’ evaluation of student work. One example (below) has been developed by the Northern Illinois University Writing Lab.

	Very Weak	Weak	Low Average	High Average	Strong	Exceptional
Content						
Organization						
Readability						
Correctness						

Activities:

Each subject area will be involved with improving the students' skills in expressing their knowledge, ideas and opinions.

Department Activities:

Art: Students will explain their artwork and critique the artwork of others. Students will be required to describe what they see in each piece, analyze how the work is organized, interpret what message the art communicates and judge what they think of the piece.

Business: Students will produce documents that are viable expression of ideas in a variety of formats that include: business letters, marketing plans, explanation and application of business law. These documents could be expressed in a typewritten form such as letters, memos and financial statements. They could also take the form of power point presentations, video presentations or web page based designs.

English: Students will use all forms of composition including description, narration, exposition and persuasion in a variety of contexts. Student writing practices develop from fundamental grammar and paragraph writing to self-analysis and peer editing.

Family & Consumer Sciences: Students will write descriptive, informative and analytical papers.

Foreign Language: Students will emphasize target language in written and oral form to communicate cultural appreciation and understanding of that target language. Students will develop skills to master the use of proper grammatical structure, correct and appropriate vocabulary, and proper context of the target language. Students will demonstrate mastery in a variety of venues that include written and electronic media.

Industrial Technology: Students will complete writing activities including: project proposals, material lists, description of techniques or methodologies, and explanations of approaches to problem solving.

Mathematics: Students will write descriptions of problem solving techniques, create story problems and describe a non-mathematical entity in mathematical terms. Students may journal attitudes and impressions of

mathematical concepts and self-evaluate. Students may explain and summarize steps and results from lab projects.

Music: Students will use music as an inspiration for creative writing and journaling. Students describe effects created by the use of specific instrumentation or other elements of music.

Physical Education: Students will analyze rule violations, describe skills or sensations associated with physical activities or problems. Students will write article reviews, develop personal fitness goals and analyze their development and stress levels.

Religious Education: Students have the possibility of a whole spectrum of written expression. Students will write prayers and/or personal journals, reflection papers, reaction papers and research papers.

Science: Students will use written language to solve problems, apply the scientific method, evaluate ethics and the impact of science and interpret lab results.

Social Studies: Students will use a wide range of written expression. This includes the utilization of primary and secondary sources in composing research papers, document based interpretations, summaries of psychological experiments, and essay questions that require the use of historical facts to support an interpretation of events.

Person(s) Responsible:

Each teacher will be responsible for collecting the data on the activities (interventions) they conduct according to the standardized format and providing the data to their department chairperson.

The chairperson of each department will be responsible for collecting the data from each of the department members and providing the data to the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will provide the data to the assistant principal who will be responsible for the entry of the data into the NCA software.

Timeline:

The interventions will begin with the 9th and 10th grade students in the 2005-2006 school year.

The interventions will become imbedded in the curriculum for as long as they are deemed effective.

For purposes of the NCA, data will be collected at the end of school year 2006-2007. Evaluation of the success of the interventions will be reported to the NCA by December of the 2007-2008 school year.

Resources:

The Administration of the school has pledged to provide the time, expertise, technology and support necessary to ensure ongoing school improvement.

Staff Development:

The performance goal target team foresees the need for staff development:

- A. To alleviate teachers' trepidation caused by inconsistent style standards.
- B. To familiarize teachers with appropriate writing activities and techniques
- C. To acquaint teachers with the standard rubric that will be used to evaluate written work.

The first step in staff development took place with an in-service presentation by J. Emmett Goggin. The presentation articulated "The Five Types of Writing" as delineated by John J. Collins in his program entitled *Developing Writing and Thinking Skills Across the Curriculum: A Practical Guide for Schools*.

This target team plans to evaluate the viability of *Bud's Research Paper Computer Manual* as a style guide. Currently, all students are required to purchase the Bud's Guide when enrolling at Boylan. *Buds* has been the school wide authority for several years and may have outlived its usefulness. A more appropriate style resource will not only address the needs of the student writer but also alleviate teacher trepidation concerning complexities of style.

The team plans to conduct information and training sessions on the use of the rubric that will be adopted for school wide assessment of writing.

Performance Goal #2 Team Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Department</u>
Sue May	Mathematics
Constance McCarthy	Religious Studies
Mary Jean Voigt	Social Studies
Debbie Marinelli	English
Jerry Kerrigan	Science
Judy Wentz	Foreign Language

Student Performance Goal # 2

All students will improve their verbal skills in a variety of contexts.

Supporting Data for Goal # 2.

Student, parent and teacher survey results.

P.L.A.N. subscores.

STS High School Placement Test subscores.

Anecdotal information gleaned from teacher, parent and student input agrees that many opportunities exist for improving verbal skills. However, teachers in particular believe that the opportunities would be much more effective if there were a more organized approach to address the development of these skills. Objective information from both the PLAN given to sophomores and the High School Placement Test (HSPT) that we administer to all incoming freshmen tends to document the need for vocabulary related skill development. The PLAN gives relatively little information about these skills except through the Usage and Rhetorical sub scores. What information is present tends to verify the results that are more specifically addressed in the HSPT subscores that measure specific vocabulary and usage of language in context. The HSPT year over year reports that our freshman students, as a whole, fall within the 50th percentile in all tested areas. The subscores show that vocabulary and verbal skills tend to be average to below average. Development of verbal skills impacts on all areas of the curriculum and the faculty believes that a systematic approach to improving verbal skills will strengthen our students' academic skills.

Intervention:

Teachers will incorporate verbal skills development as an integral part of their course work.

Students will develop skills to apply word attack strategies and choose vocabulary appropriate to context.

Research:

The Illinois Learning Standards cite these goals:

- A. Apply word analysis and vocabulary skills to comprehend selections.
 - 1. In early high school
 - a. Expand knowledge of word origins and derivations...to extend vocabulary development.
 - b. Compare the meaning of words and phrases....
 - 2. In late high school
 - a. Identify and analyze new terminology applying knowledge of word origins and derivations in a variety of practical settings.
 - b. Analyze the meaning of abstract concepts and the effects of particular word and phrase choices.
- B. ...use language appropriate to the situation and audience.
 - 1. In early high school
 - a. Analyze how text is used to express and emphasize ideas.
 - b. Describe the influence of language structure and word choice to convey viewpoint.
 - 2. In late high school
 - a. Evaluate how authors use text to express their ideas.
 - b. Use verbal strategies to maintain communication....

Other References: (see appendix)

Smith, Carl B. Vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading English and Communication Bloomington, IN, 1997

Lickliger, Patricia. Building an active college vocabulary. Addison Wesley Langman. 2002.

100 words every high school graduate should know. Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

Assessments:

Locally Developed Assessments:

The assessment will measure the vocabulary growth of each grade level. The pre-test, post-test format will measure word knowledge as well as the specific focus of each year. For example, freshman assessment will be a test of words directly introduced to students as well as their knowledge of the word attack strategies taught.

Activities:

Each department will develop an inventory of language key to its discipline. Department heads may do this individually or ask others in their department to collaborate. Department heads will then give their respective list to the committee. The committee will collate all department lists and create four master lists. These lists will be further examined for cross-curricular vocabulary.

A pre-test will be developed and administered to each class level at the beginning of the school year. After the pre-test, a master list would then be made and posted in the classrooms for reinforcement.

In addition to the development of the master list, at each grade level, a category, classification or element necessary for vocabulary and usage development will be emphasized. The following will be emphasized in student work across the curriculum:

Freshman level: Word attack strategies, prefixes, suffixes and root words

Sophomore level: Determining meaning through context, including denotation and connotation.

Junior level: Foreign language contributions to English

Senior level: Words new to the language, technical words, and formal and informal usage.

Persons Responsible:

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Resources:

The Administration of the school has pledged to provide the time, technology, expertise and support necessary to ensure ongoing school improvement.

Staff Development:

The verbal skill goal target team foresees the need for staff development:

- A. To alleviate teachers' anxiety caused by unfamiliarity with the content associated with class level activities.
- B. To familiarize teachers with appropriate activities and techniques to effectively teach the content associated with each category, classification or element.
- C. To acquaint teachers with the reporting standards that need to be followed across the curriculum.

In service will be conducted to provide faculty information and support before the end of the current school year. (One Session)

In service training (four sessions) will be conducted at the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year to familiarize teachers with the activities and techniques associated with each category, classification or element and with the reporting standards that need to be followed. Each session will be devoted to one of four levels. Information, techniques, and tips will be provided to the staff on an on-going basis during the year.