

**EAST PEORIA
CENTRAL JUNIOR
HIGH SCHOOL**



**PLAN FOR A
COMPREHENSIVE
ADOLESCENT
LITERACY POLICY**

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INTRODUCTION

Creating a comprehensive adolescent literacy policy to guide the instructional practices of all teachers at Central Junior High will not be an easy task. While literacy instruction has been strong at CJHS, comprehensive academic literacy development is a relatively new effort. There has been a distinct disconnect and carryover of adolescent literacy skills taught in Reading and Language Arts to the content areas. Since the adoption of the Common Core Standards by the state of Illinois, the importance of developing literacy skills in science, social studies and technical subjects is critical.

At this time, our staff is working towards raising their awareness and expertise in the area of comprehensive adolescent literacy. With strong teacher and administrative support, our goal is to implement a Comprehensive Adolescent Literacy Policy by the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year.

During the last several years, our nation's attention has been focused on reading education. Recent attention has been directed almost entirely to early literacy, that is, to reading in the primary grades. While getting third graders to read proficiently is important, many excellent third-grade readers will falter or fail in later academic tasks if the teaching of reading is neglected in the middle and secondary grades.

In the 1950's, when opportunities to achieve a middle-class lifestyle were available to those without a high school diploma, students unable to convert third-grade literacy skills into levels useful for comprehending and learning from complex, content-rich materials could drop out of high school and still hope to achieve a reasonably comfortable lifestyle. In 2010, however, there are few opportunities for students who are unable to convert their elementary reading skills into the skills necessary to succeed in today's workforce.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that every student surpasses the basic literacy skills of the early elementary grades, to more challenging and rewarding literacy of the middle and secondary years. This requires, for many students, teaching them new literacy skills: how to read purposefully, select materials that are of interest, learn from those materials, figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words, integrate new information with information previously known, resolve conflicting content in different texts, differentiate fact from opinion, and recognize the perspective of the writer.

Ensuring adequate ongoing literacy development for all students in the middle and high school years is a more challenging task than ensuring excellent reading education in the primary grades, for two reasons:

1. Middle and secondary school literacy skills are more complex, more embedded in subject matters, and more multiply determined.
2. Adolescents are not universally motivated to improve their reading skills, or as interested in school based-reading as primary grade students (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

The purpose of the development of a comprehensive Adolescent Literacy Policy for Central Junior High School is also in response to local, state and national data that reflect an alarming number of students, who are graduating high school without the literacy skills necessary to be successful in college and/or the workplace.

Nationally, one in four students in grades four through twelve was a struggling reader in 2005, and fewer than one-third of public school 8th graders read at or above grade level (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005). Some of these students lack the skills necessary to read new or unusual words or to figure out their meanings. Most fail to understand much of what they read. Older students who are tackling complex informational text face serious and growing challenges. Even in our modern, multimedia world, most content-area knowledge (science, social studies, history) after third grade is presented through print-based resources (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

As Biancarosa & Snow explain...

Clearly, there is a need to improve adolescent literacy, and this need is all the more pertinent because of the rapidly accelerating challenges of our modern society. Literacy demands have increased and changed as the technological capabilities have expanded and been made widely available; concurrently, the need for flexible, self-regulated individuals who can respond to rapidly changing contexts has also increased. The goal in improving adolescent literacy should not simply be to graduate more students from slightly improved schools, but rather to envision what improvements will be necessary to prepare tomorrow's youth for the challenges they will face twenty and thirty years from now.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 53 percent of all college students take remedial courses because they did not gain the skills they should have gained in secondary schools (NCES, 2001). Another study conducted by ACT indicates that approximately 32 percent of high school graduates are not reading for college level English composition courses (ACT, 2005). In addition, approximately 40 percent of high school graduates lack the literacy skills employers seek (Achieve, Inc., 2005).

WHAT IS ADOLESCENT LITERACY?

What does it mean to be literate? More important, what does it mean to be literate in the 21st century? Reading proficiency at the middle and high school level is usually defined as the ability to understand and learn from grade-level text. Of course, this is a very complex skill itself, but its most essential elements involve:

- the ability to read text accurately and fluently;
- enough background knowledge and vocabulary to make sense of the content;
- knowledge and skill in using reading strategies that improve understanding or repair it when it breaks down;
- the ability to think and reason about the information and concepts in the text; and
- motivation to understand and learn from text.

In other words, reading proficiency in adolescents requires that students be able to identify the words on the page accurately and fluently; that they have enough knowledge and thinking ability to understand the words, sentences and paragraphs; and that they be motivated and engaged enough to use their knowledge and thinking ability to understand and learn from the text. We emphasize that motivation to understand and learn from text is a critical component of reading comprehension for middle and high school students. It takes real effort to understand the many textbooks and other forms of complex written materials students encounter in their study of literature, history, social studies, science, or mathematics. Unless students are appropriately engaged, they often do not fully apply the skills they have, nor will they be motivated to acquire additional skills and knowledge.

Although the research specific to adolescent literacy is not as extensive as that available for beginning readers (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), if what we currently know about literacy instruction were more broadly applied in practice, there is little doubt that levels of literacy at Central Junior High School would improve.

“Enough is already known about adolescent literacy--both the nature of the problems of struggling readers and the types of interventions and approaches to address these needs--in order to act immediately on a broad scale.” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006)

Based on a review of the literature associated with adolescent literacy, several elements, if implemented correctly, can result in significant gains in the literacy skill sets of all students. Those elements, as well as a plan for implementation of the elements, are explained in detail later.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Develop and communicate a literacy vision:** With the implementation of this Literacy Policy work toward a shared understanding of literacy goals, and the creation of a school wide literacy vision will inspire faculty, students, parents, and community to motivate and engage students in becoming competent readers, writers, speakers, and thinkers.
2. **Translate the literacy vision into action:** In addition, this Literacy Policy will establish school wide support from teachers in all content areas in the implementation of elements associated with effective literacy instruction. It will provide a plan for quality professional development, and a system of staff accountability. It will ensure that interventions are in place for struggling readers and writers, and establish procedures for monitoring those students' progress.
3. **Create and sustain a supportive, literacy-rich environment:** An academically oriented, orderly, and purposeful school climate with literacy as the central focus will be promoted. Thus improving overall levels of literacy proficiency amongst all students.
4. **Ensure that all students make at least expected yearly growth in reading ability each school year.** Students who enter middle school reading at grade level need to learn many new skills and acquire extensive knowledge in order to meet grade-level standards at the end of high school.

THE LITERACY POLICY

PREFACE

The vision for an effective literacy program recognizes that creating fluent and proficient readers and writers is a very complex task and requires that teachers coordinate their instruction to reinforce important strategies and concepts. It is important in a comprehensive and coordinated literacy program that teachers work in teams and are responsible for a cohort of students. This is not to advocate that math, science, and history teachers should become strictly teachers of reading and writing, but rather that interdisciplinary teams that meet on a regular basis will provide opportunities for reading and writing teachers to better support content-area teachers. These teams can also create more consistent instruction by reinforcing reading and writing skills, such as note-taking and comprehension strategies. An effective literacy program should implement many of the instructional elements in a consistent and coordinated way.

Because the literacy needs of adolescents are so diverse, the intensity and nature of instruction in a comprehensive and coordinated literacy program—as well as which teachers are involved—will vary considerably. Some students need their content teachers to make only modest accommodations or adjustments; other students need learning strategies embedded in content material, explicit strategy instruction, or instruction in basic skills or even the basic language elements that are the foundation of literacy competence. Secondary schools must recognize adolescents' varying needs and develop a comprehensive program that will successfully address the needs of all their students.

While it may seem a daunting task for Central Junior High School to implement all of the elements outlined in this policy, and although each element may be treated as a distinct entity, it is important to recognize that the elements are often synergistically related (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). The addition of one element can stimulate the inclusion of another. We have chosen NOT to view these elements as isolated elements in an inventory of potential elements, but rather as a group in which elements have a dynamic and powerful interrelationship. For example, it is difficult to implement text-based collaborative learning without a classroom library of diverse texts. Another example of how these elements are intertwined is to envision embedding effective instructional principals without taking into account the research behind adolescent motivation. Central Junior High School expects that a mixture of these elements will generate the biggest return. It will remain to be seen what the optimal mix of these

elements will be, and it may certainly be different from year to year depending on our changing student population.

It is also important to identify that the elements being proposed as part of our Adolescent Literacy Policy are divided into two sections: instructional improvements and infrastructural improvements. In order to achieve the biggest bang for our buck, it is critical that the instructional elements must be implemented in conjunction with the infrastructural elements.

Throughout the Literacy Policy, a description is given for each of the elements. Following the description of each element is a summary of how the element will be implemented in conjunction with the Policy. Because the research into adolescent literacy is on going the implications of the research will inevitably impact how the different elements are implemented. In addition, this is a new endeavor for the staff and administration at Central Junior High School. As professionals, we will consistently evaluate the progress of this policy and make necessary changes to it.

INSTRUCTIONAL ELEMENTS

Direct, Explicit Comprehension Instruction

Effective adolescent literacy interventions must address reading comprehension. When looking at comprehension instruction, we must focus on the fact that all teachers share responsibility in improving adolescent literacy. We recognize that the texts students read across disciplines become increasingly more complex each year, and students often require instruction to access these texts. Every content area teacher has a role to play if adolescents are to learn with and from texts. Further, students must be able to read a wide variety of texts, from the great works of literature to newspaper articles to technical manuals to science lab instructions. To do this, students require instruction and practice in reading these types of materials. We all learn by reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. Each component of literacy must be taught and used across the day. When this happens, the strategies we teach become *transportable* and *transparent* for students.

By *transportable*, it is meant that students use strategies they learn in one class to comprehend in another. By *transparent*, it is meant that strategies become so ingrained in the students' thinking that they are applied automatically (Ivey & Fisher, 2006).

A number of excellent approaches have been shown to be effective transportable and transparent strategies and high school contexts, but no one approach is necessarily better than another; the ideal intervention will tap more than one comprehension instructional approach. Possible approaches include:

- **Comprehension strategies instruction**, which is instruction that explicitly gives students strategies that aid them in comprehending a wide variety of texts.
- **Comprehension monitoring and metacognition instruction**, which is instruction that teaches students to become aware of how they understand while they read.
- **Teacher modeling**, which involves the teacher reading texts aloud, making her own use of strategies and practices apparent to his/her students;
- **Scaffolded instruction**, which involves teachers giving high support for students practicing new skills and then slowly decreasing that support to increase student ownership and self-sufficiency
- **Apprenticeship models**, which involve teachers engaging students in a content-centered learning relationship.

Note, too, that these approaches are not listed in order of importance and have been utilized by effective readers long before they were ever dubbed and defined as “strategies” or “metacognition.” Many of the existing instructional options utilize more than one of these approaches. Whatever approach is utilized,

teachers should teach these approaches explicitly by explaining to students how and when to use certain strategies. Teachers should also explain why they are teaching particular strategies and have students employ them in multiple contexts with texts from a variety of genres and subject areas. In order for these strategies to become transportable and transparent, they must be taught frequently and consistently.

Implementation of direct, explicit comprehension instruction at Central Junior High School will include the following:

- *All teachers will regularly implement different comprehension strategies into their lesson planning.*
- *Continued professional development will be provided in comprehension strategies.*
- *All teachers will participate in a book study of Creating a Literacy-Rich School for Adolescents.*
- *All teachers will form Professional Learning Teams. In these teams, teachers will collaborate on which strategies to teach, share feedback on implementation of strategies and communicate professional development needs.*
- *All Professional Learning Teams will post their findings in the form of a blog.*
- *Teachers will reflect daily anticipatory sets in their lesson planning.*
- *Teachers will incorporate daily opportunities for student reading and writing in their lesson plans.*
- *All teachers will maintain a portfolio of artifacts associated with implementation of this element.*
- *CJHS will develop Academic Vocabulary Lists for all content areas.*
- *Research-based vocabulary instruction will occur in all content areas.*

Effective Instructional Principles Embedded in Content

This element has two forms. The first form applies to the English teachers. When instructional principles are embedded in content, the English teacher does not simply teach a technique (such as outlining) as an abstract skill, but teaches it using content-area materials. Students should receive instruction and then practice their new skills using these materials. Too often reading and writing instruction focuses solely on literature and does not promote the transfer of the skills into the context of content-area materials. Furthermore, learning from reading in content-area texts requires skills that are different than the skills needed to comprehend literature. Language arts teachers need to expand their instruction to include approaches and texts that will facilitate not only comprehension but also learning from texts.

The second form of this element applies to subject-area teachers. When instructional principles are embedded in content, subject-area teachers provide or reinforce instruction in the skills and strategies that are particularly effective in their subject areas. This instruction should be coordinated with the English teachers, literacy coaches, and other subject-area teachers. The idea is not that content-area teachers should become reading and writing teachers, but rather that they should emphasize the reading and writing practices that are specific to their subjects, so students are encouraged to read and write like historians, scientists, mathematicians, and other subject-area experts.

Additionally, it is important that all subject matter teachers use common research-based instructional strategies to effectively promote learning. The Rigor/Relevance Framework is a tool developed by staff of the International Center for Leadership in Education to examine curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The Rigor/Relevance Framework is based on two dimensions of higher standards and student achievement.

First, there is the Knowledge Taxonomy, a continuum based on the six levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, which describes the increasingly complex ways in which we think. The low end involves acquiring knowledge and being able to recall or locate that knowledge. The high end labels the more complex ways in which individuals use knowledge, such as taking several pieces of knowledge and combining them in both logical and creative ways.

The second continuum, developed by Dr. Willard Dagget and known as the Application Model, is one of action. Its five levels describe putting knowledge to use. While the low end is knowledge acquired for its own sake, the high end signifies use of that knowledge to solve complex real-world problems and to create unique projects, designs, and other works for use in real-world situations.

In addition, Central Junior High will focus on instructional strategies that engage all learners. These will include Activating, Cognitive and Summarizing Strategies.

Implementation of effective instructional principals embedded in content at Central Junior High School will include the following:

- *All teachers will activate students' prior knowledge through the use of engaging strategies designed to focus learning (Activating).*
- *All teachers will provide a structure for learning that actively promotes the comprehension and retention of knowledge through the use of engaging strategies that acknowledge the brain's limitations of capacity and processing (Cognitive).*
- *All teachers will promote the retention of knowledge through the use of engaging strategies designed to rehearse and practice skills for the purpose of moving knowledge into long-term memory.*
- *Teachers will meet in their learning teams to share implementation strategies and provide feedback. Information will be shared on the team blog.*
- *All staff will receive professional development training in the Rigor & Relevance Framework.*
- *All teachers will maintain a portfolio of artifacts associated with implementation of this element.*

Motivation and Self-Directed Learning

This element addresses the need to promote greater student engagement and motivation. As students progress through the grades, they become increasingly “tuned out,” and building student choices into the school day is an important way to reawaken student engagement. This is critical, because competency in reading is necessary but insufficient by itself to engender better academic performance. Students need to be self-regulating not only to become more successful academically, but also to be able to employ their skills flexibly long after they leave school.

One way that motivation and engagement are instilled and maintained is to provide students with opportunities to select for themselves the materials they read and topics they research. One of the easiest ways to build some choice into the students' school day is to incorporate independent reading time in which they can read whatever they choose. Yet this piece of the curriculum is often dropped after the primary grades. Providing students with additional choices, such as research and writing topics, further stimulates motivated and engaged students. However, self-regulation is only developed when students are given choices *and* the instructional support and aids needed to succeed at their chosen tasks.

Another way to better engage students in literacy and learning is to promote relevancy in what students read and learn. As a first step, teachers need to “tune in” to their students' lives in order to understand what they find relevant and why. Then teachers can begin to redesign instruction so that it is more obviously relevant to students.

Efforts to address motivation and self-directed learning at Central Junior High School will include the following:

- *Teachers will regularly offer students the opportunity to choose what materials they read regarding common topics.*
- *Teachers will regularly offer students the opportunity to choose paths of study under Larger Ideas or Themes as explained by Ivey & Fisher, p.p. 2-5.*
- *All teachers will maintain a portfolio of artifacts associated with implementation of this element.*

Text-Based Collaborative Learning

Another element is text-based collaborative learning, which means that when students work in small groups, they should not simply discuss a topic, but *interact with each other around a text*. This text might be assigned or self-selected reading or it might be essays that the students are writing. The former case involves designing learning opportunities for pairs or small groups of students that are similar to the book clubs or literature circles implemented in primary grades. Learning is decentralized in these groups because the meaning drawn from a text or multiple texts is negotiated through a group process. In

addition, such an approach is not limited to the language arts classroom, but can be implemented in subject-area classes and with students who have a wide range of abilities. For instance, students might read different texts about the Underground Railroad—each at his or her own reading level—and then present the ideas (rather than the plots) to the circle. A similar approach can be used in any subject area, even math, by having students work together on the same problem or on a set of similar problems. Moreover, text-based collaborative learning is effective in improving not only reading skills but also writing skills. The important aspect of this approach is that teachers provide scaffolding for engagement at every ability level in the class and promote better oral language and content-area skills by giving the students concrete problems to discuss or solve. Such an approach requires that the teacher provide instruction about how to use time effectively, which means assigning roles within each group, at least initially, to ensure effective implementation.

Implementation of text-based collaborative learning opportunities at Central Junior High School will include the following:

- *All teachers will know the Lexile level of each student.*
- *All teachers will know the Lexile level of all text being provided to students.*
- *All teachers will be proficient in utilizing the text databases, such as EBSCO, SIRS, eLibrary, Prairecat, etc., to access differentiated text.*
- *All teachers will provide regular opportunities for text-based collaborative learning using scaffolded text within their classes.*
- *All teachers will maintain a portfolio of artifacts associated with implementation of this element.*

Strategic Tutoring

Some students require or would benefit from intense, individualized instruction. This is particularly true of the student who struggles with decoding and fluency, but is also true of students requiring short-term, focused help. Such students should be given the opportunity to participate in tutoring, which need not occur only during the school day. Furthermore, through approaches detailed above, instruction in general education classes should be differentiated to allow students access to important content. Tutoring is referred to as strategic in this element to emphasize that while students may need tutorial help to acquire critical curriculum knowledge, they also need to be taught “how to learn” curriculum information. Hence, within strategic tutoring sessions, tutors teach learning strategies while helping students complete their content assignments. The goal of strategic tutoring is to empower adolescents to complete similar tasks independently in the future.

Implementation of strategic tutoring at Central Junior High School will include the following:

- *Learning teams will systematically evaluate the growth of all students during Team Articulation time.*
- *Students will continue to receive additional strategic instruction through the our Rtl model.*

Diverse Texts

This element involves providing students with diverse texts that present a wide range of topics at a variety of reading levels. Whether teaching reading and writing or a subject area, teachers need to find texts at a wide range of difficulty levels. Too often students become frustrated because they are forced to read books that are simply too difficult for them to decode and comprehend simultaneously.

Learning cannot occur under these conditions. Texts must be below students’ frustration level, but must also be interesting; that is, they should be high interest and low readability. Given the wide range of reading and writing abilities present in almost any middle or high school classroom, this means having books available from a wide range of levels on the same topic. The term “diverse texts” is also used to indicate that the material should represent a wide range of topics. Topical diversity in any classroom (or school) library affords students more choices for self-selected reading and research projects. The range of topics should include a wide variety of cultural, linguistic, and demographic groups. Students should be able to find representatives of themselves in the available books, but they should also be able to find representatives of others about whom they wish to learn. High-interest, low-difficulty texts play a significant role in an adolescent literacy program and are critical for fostering the reading skills of

struggling readers and the engagement of all students. In addition to using appropriate grade-level textbooks that may already be available in the classroom, it is crucial to have a range of texts in the classroom that link to multiple ability levels and connect to students' background experiences.

Efforts to provide diverse texts in all classes at Central Junior High School will include the following:

- *All teachers will know the Lexile level of each student.*
- *All teachers will know the Lexile level of all text being provided to students.*
- *All teachers will be proficient in utilizing the text databases, such as Ebsco, SIRS, eLibrary, Prairecat, etc., to access differentiated text.*
- *All teachers will provide regular opportunities for text-based collaborative learning using scaffolded text within their classes.*
- *All teachers will maintain a portfolio of artifacts associated with implementation of this element.*

Intensive Writing

Effective adolescent literacy programs must include an element that helps students improve their writing skills. Fourteen percent of all freshmen entering degree-granting postsecondary institutions take remedial writing courses (NCES, 2004). At public two-year institutions, 23 percent of entering freshmen take remedial writing courses (NCES, 2004). Even the best readers in high school do not necessarily write well enough to succeed in the business world or college.

We recognize that writing plays two distinct but complementary roles (Graham & Perin, 2007). First it is a skill that draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text) to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. Second, writing is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Keys, 2000; Shanahan, 2004; Sperling & Freedman, 2001). Because these roles are closely linked, our English instructors will strive to use content-area text to teach reading and writing skills and content-area teachers will strive to provide instruction an practice in discipline-specific reading and writing.

Research supports the idea that writing instruction also improves reading comprehension. For example, students who are given the opportunity to write in conjunction with reading show more evidence of critical thinking about reading. Likewise, many of the skills involved in writing—such as grammar and spelling—reinforce reading skills. However, traditional explicit grammar instruction is not effective and may actually be harmful to writing development, whereas instruction in sentence combining, summarization, and writing strategies significantly improve students' writing. Instruction in the writing process is also helpful, provided that it is connected to the kinds of writing tasks students will be expected to perform well in high school and beyond.

As content area specialists, teachers often speak a certain language. It is our job to initiate the novice student into the professional conversation. In other words, we want very much for students to use the proper terminology, terminology that teachers and the text model. However, the only way for students to bring "content language" into their vernacular is to give them writing experiences that allow them to transition from the latter to the former (Benjamin, 2005).

The defining characteristic of quality intensive writing instruction is not that there is simply more of it. Rather, such instruction has clear objectives and expectations and consistently challenges students, regardless of ability, to engage with academic content at high levels of reasoning. One meta-analysis of the effectiveness of school-based writing-to-learn interventions proved interventions that included prompts for students to reflect on their current knowledge, confusions, and learning processes proved particularly effective (Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004). The same meta-analysis concluded: it is possible that longer writing assignments have debilitating motivational consequences. Students who cognitively or affectively struggle with writing may find longer assignments onerous, and these motivational consequences may weaken the positive learning effects of writing.

“This review suggests that the learning enhancement derived from writing stems, at least in part, not so much from helping students to find links between the content and their personal experiences as from scaffolding metacognitive processes, presumably in the service of developing self-regulation of learning strategies. Writing interventions in which students were asked to reflect on their current understandings, confusions, and learning processes typically yielded more positive results. One might expect that, if the effectiveness of writing to learn is a result of metacognitive scaffolding, then longer-term treatments that give students more time to become adept at self-evaluation and perhaps even to internalize a self-reflective posture would result in improved effectiveness. There is some evidence in this review that, in fact, longer interventions yield more positive effects. One might further speculate that feedback to student writing specifically directed at supporting metacognition and learning strategies could prove most effective.” (Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004)

Implementation of intensive writing instruction at Central Junior High School will include the following:

- *English instructors will strive to use content-area text to teach reading and writing skills and content-area teachers will strive to provide instruction and practice in discipline-specific reading and writing.*
- *All staff will receive professional development in the effectiveness of metacognitive and self-regulatory writing processes.*
- *All teachers will provide strategic, daily opportunities for students to reflect on current knowledge, confusions, and learning processes, as well as, demonstrate their content understanding through writing.*
- *The meta-analysis “Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools” (Graham & Perin, 2007) provides eleven key elements of effective adolescent writing instruction. All teachers will be responsible for providing explicit instruction in the following elements:*
 - ***Writing Strategies**- teaching students strategies for planning, revising, and editing their work.*
 - ***Summarization**- teaching students how to summarize text.*
 - *Collaborative Writing- providing instructional arrangements in which adolescents work together to plan, draft, revise and edit their work.*
 - ***Specific Product Goals**- assigning students specific, reachable goals for the writing they are to complete.*
 - ***Word Processing**- providing instruction in the use of computers and word processors as instructional supports for writing assignments.*
 - ***Sentence Combining**- teaching students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences.*
 - ***Prewriting**- engaging students in activities designed to help them generate or organize ideas for writing.*
 - ***Inquiry Activities**- engaging students in analyzing immediate, concrete data to help them develop ideas and content for a particular writing task.*
 - ***Process writing Approach**- interweaving a number of writing instructional activities in a workshop environment that stresses extended writing opportunities, writing for authentic audiences, personalized instruction, And cycles of writing.*
 - ***Study of Models**- providing students with opportunities to read, analyze and emulate models of good writing.*
 - ***Writing for Content Learning**- using writing as a tool for learning content material.*
- *All teachers will incorporate direct, explicit instruction in summarization and sentence combining into their lessons.*
- *All teachers will provide direct, explicit instruction in writing strategies within their content areas.*
- *All teachers will maintain a portfolio of artifacts associated with implementation of this element.*

A Technology Component

Professionals and lay people are increasingly voicing support for inclusion of this element in a literacy program, because technology plays an increasingly central role in our society. Technology is both a facilitator of literacy and a medium of literacy. Effective adolescent literacy programs therefore should use technology as both an instructional tool and an instructional topic.

As a tool, technology can help teachers provide needed supports for struggling readers, including instructional reinforcement and opportunities for guided practice. For example, there are computer programs that help students improve decoding, spelling, fluency, and vocabulary, and more programs are quickly being developed to address comprehension and writing.

As a topic, technology is changing the reading and writing demands of modern society. Reading and writing in the fast-paced, networked world require new skills unimaginable a decade ago.

In regards to the Literacy Policy, we will focus on the notion that technology is a medium of literacy.

- *All teachers will make a concerted effort to incorporate technologies such as video conferencing, blogging, forming wikis.*
- *Teachers will make efforts to develop lessons; in which students are given opportunities collaborate with other students via the use of technology.*
- *All teachers will maintain a portfolio of artifacts associated with implementation of this element.*

Ongoing Formative Assessment of Students

This element is included under instructional improvements because the best instructional improvements are informed by ongoing assessment of student strengths and needs. Such assessments are often, but not exclusively, informal and frequently occur on a daily basis, and therefore are not necessarily suited to the summative task of accountability reporting systems. Data should be cataloged on a computer system that would allow teachers, administrators, and evaluators to inspect students' progress individually and by class. These formative assessments are specifically designed to inform instruction on a very frequent basis so that adjustments in instruction can be made to ensure that students are on pace to reach mastery targets.

Formative assessment has been occurring at Central Junior High School for several years.

- *Ongoing formative assessment at Central Junior High School will occur through continued use of the Measure of Academic Progress, the state assessments and universal administration of Curriculum-based Measurement probes in reading and math.*
- *Frequent progress monitoring of students identified as needing interventions in math and reading will occur using CBM probes*
- *In 2011-2012, Central Junior High School will begin aligning its curriculum to the Common Core Standards. This process will culminate in the development of benchmark assessments aligned to the Common Core Standards. These common assessments will be administered routinely within the discipline areas.*
- *In addition, teachers will receive professional development on how to conduct additional formative assessments for their students.*

INFRASTRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

Extended Time for Literacy

None of the above-mentioned elements are likely to affect much change if instruction is limited to thirty or forty-five minutes per day. It is argued the need for two to four hours of literacy-connected learning daily is a necessity (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). This time is to be spent with texts and a focus on reading and writing effectively. Although some of this time should be spent with a language arts teacher, instruction in science, history, and other subject areas qualifies as fulfilling the requirements of this element if the instruction is text centered and informed by instructional principles designed to convey content and also to practice and improve literacy skills.

To leverage time for increased interaction with texts across subject areas, teachers will need to reconceptualize their understanding of what it means to teach in a subject area. In other words, teachers need to realize they are not just teaching content knowledge but also ways of reading and writing specific to a subject area. This reconceptualization, in turn, will require rearticulation of standards and revision of pre-service training.

Implementation of extended time for literacy at Central Junior High School will include the following:

- *During the 2011-2012 school year, the Central Junior High School Improvement Committee will explore school-wide opportunities for students to spend with texts and focus on reading and writing effectively.*
- *Professional development will be provided to teachers, so they may easily find time in their lesson for extended time for literacy.*

Professional Development

Professional development does not refer to the typical onetime workshop, or even a short-term series of workshops, but to ongoing, long-term professional development, which is more likely to promote lasting, positive changes in teacher knowledge and practice. The development effort should also be systemic, including not only classroom teachers but also literacy coaches, resource room personnel, librarians, and administrators. Effective professional development will use data from research studies of adult learning and the conditions needed to effect sustained change. Professional development opportunities should be built into the regular school schedule, with consistent opportunities to learn about new research and practices as well as opportunities to implement and reflect upon new ideas.

Effective professional development will help school personnel create and maintain indefinitely a team-oriented approach to improving the instruction and institutional structures that promote better adolescent literacy.

The affects of the professional development element of the Literacy Policy at Central Junior High School will include:

- *By the end of the 2010-2011 school year, a three-year professional development plan will be completed. This plan will detail who will provide necessary training in the elements associated with this Policy. It will also detail when this training will occur, as well as, which staff will participate.*
- *All professional development for the next three years will be tied directly to the CJHS school improvement plan.*

Ongoing Summative Assessment of Students and Programs

This element is listed under infrastructural improvements because of the substantial coordination that such assessment requires and because of its intended audience, which is the local school district administration, the state and federal departments of education, and others who fund and/or support the school, such as private foundations, the local community, parents, and students. In contrast to formative assessments, these assessments are designed specifically for implementation with continuous progress-monitoring systems. These systems would allow teachers to track students throughout a school year and, ideally, over an entire academic career, from kindergarten through high school. In addition, these systems would allow for ongoing internal and external evaluation of the implemented program. These data and more formative assessment data could be catalogued on a computer system that would allow teachers, administrators, and evaluators to inspect students' progress individually, by class, by cohort, and by school. These assessments are more formal than the formative assessments, but should go beyond state assessments and be designed to demonstrate progress specific to school and program goals, and, if possible, to also inform instruction. Ideally, the assessment results would be generated and shared in a timely fashion so that they might also be of use to teachers in planning instruction and to students in monitoring their success and progress in school.

The affects of the ongoing summative assessment of students and programs element of the Literacy Policy at Central Junior High School will include:

- *Continued student assessment using MAP and the Illinois State Assessment system will occur.*
- *An Individual Academic Plan will be developed for every student. This plan will include all assessment data collected. It will also detail any interventions provided for the student if he/she qualified for such interventions. Additional information such as career assessments and social/emotional interventions will be included in the plans.*

Teacher Teams

This element ensures that the school structure supports coordinated instruction and planning in an interdisciplinary teacher team. This vision centers on teachers meeting regularly to discuss students they have in common and to align instruction. In the primary grades students see one teacher; in middle and high school grades, their daily routine changes, and they see many teachers during discrete blocks of time devoted to discrete subjects. This shift often causes a loss in consistency in literacy instruction. Teacher teams are viewed as helpful for reestablishing coordinated instruction in higher grades and as a way to promote teacher collegiality and heighten the likelihood that no child will slip through the cracks. Teacher teams that meet regularly allow teachers to plan for consistency in instruction across subject areas, which is an important step toward a comprehensive and coordinated literacy program.

Implementation of teacher teams at Central Junior High School will include the following:

- *All teachers will belong to a professional learning team. The teams will meet daily 42 minutes.*
- *Teams will be responsible for sharing feedback on the implementation of the Literacy Policy.*
- *Each team will be assigned a grade level of students to monitor.*
- *Each team member will be assigned a group of students to monitor.*
- *The teams will participate in book studies associated with the implementation of the Literacy Policy as part of on-going professional development.*
- *Teams will be expected to blog the minutes of their meetings.*

Leadership

Without a principal's clear commitment and enthusiasm, a curricular and instructional reform has no more chance of succeeding than any other school-wide reform. It is critical that a principal assumes the role of an instructional leader, who demonstrates commitment and participates in the school community. This leadership role includes a principal building his or her own personal knowledge of how young people learn and struggle with reading and writing and how they differ in their needs.

In addition, a principal who takes on the role of instructional leader will attend professional development sessions organized primarily for teachers. This knowledge and experience will give a principal the necessary understanding to organize and coordinate changes in a school's literacy program. It will further give a principal the proper foundation for making the necessary decisions to alter structural elements, such as class schedules, to ensure optimal programming for student learning. This element also applies to teachers, who should assume leadership roles and spearhead curricular improvements. Teachers play a role in ensuring the success of curricular reform, and their involvement is all the more crucial when a principal has not assumed the instructional leadership role. Without someone with an informed vision of what good literacy instruction entails leading the charge, instructional change is likely to be beset with problems.

The building administration will commit to the following in order to ensure the success of the Literacy Policy:

- *The administration will share in the decision-making associated with the Literacy Policy.*
- *The administration will continue to stay abreast of the research associated with effective literacy instruction for adolescents.*
- *The administration will guarantee that the resources needed to successfully implement the Literacy Policy are secured and made readily available to all stake holders.*
- *The administration will participate in the learning teams.*

- *The administration will coordinate the planning of meaningful professional development for the staff.*
- *The administration will participate in as much of the professional development as possible.*

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