

English Department

Revised, September, 2009

Staff:

Supervisor - Jim O'Rourke

NJASK Assessment Team (Annual NJ Tests) - Grades 5, 6, 7, and 8

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HSPA Team (Annual NJ Tests) - Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12

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Department Philosophy:

Language Arts/English teachers share a set of common beliefs. Among them are:

- A high school diploma is minimum equipment to be a productive adult.
- Learning is lifelong, and literacy is an ever-expanding set of skills.
- All students are capable of reaching literacy proficiency.
- Higher expectations drive student performance.
- Continued increase in state test scores is expected.
- More reading makes better readers.
- First we learn to write; then we write to learn.

Bright Lights:

Appetites for Reading. The words "food for thought" carry new meaning to Sharon DeRosa Smolen's eighth graders as they participate in her *Books and Breakfast* program. Students select a book of their choice and bring it to their first period English class. This gives everyone one period a week to enjoy personal, silent, sustained reading.

"We all read quietly, including me," said Ms. Smolen. "I heard many comments like, 'This is fun!' and 'Let's do this every week!'" At the end of the period, students enthusiastically share favorite parts from their books. Kids can get excited about reading when there is an opportunity for a relaxed and *nourishing* atmosphere. It's okay to try this one at home, folks.

Writers Coaching Writers. While Wallington schools have a technological edge over many schools in Bergen County and certainly over most schools in the state, it's a challenge to keep up with our students' needs for computer time for the writing they need to do in all their subjects. As our children put down their pens and pencils and go straight to the keyboard to compose text in science reports and labs, in history papers, in math journals and reports, as well as in traditional English subject essays, we find our computer rooms busy all day long.

English teacher Syrena LoRe saw an opportunity and took it. Ms. LoRe volunteered to keep the computer room in Room 204 open and supervised after school. Her true inspiration was to train a cadre of good student writers to be on hand to help those who showed up with composition, organization, mechanics of writing and usage, and the final banishing of writers' block. Still taking shape, the second floor Writing Center, thanks to Ms. LoRe's energy, should help sharpen our students' writing skills.

Visit the Library. In most English and Language Arts classrooms, the library is only a few steps away. Teachers set up bookcases and stock them with novels, biographies, poetry, memoirs, histories – all free and available to students who are looking for a “good read.”

To meet their “outside reading” requirement, students choose books to read, and teachers approve their choices. Classroom libraries are a good way to make appropriate reading choices available, convenient, and free!

Summer Recess. We hope our students enjoyed the ***Three R's of Summer recess: Relaxing, Reflecting, and Reading.*** During the summer recess all students are expected to read four books of their own choice, and to be ready to account for this assignment during the first ten days of school in September. Parents should sign the form brought or mailed home in June which testifies to their children's having read the four books.

Advanced Placement Literature and Composition students are assigned required reading and writing. They were tested on this material early in September.

Grading Policies:

English: Grades 7 & 8

25% Preparation: Homework, classwork, notebook

25% Literature/Writing

25% Vocabulary/Spelling

25% Assessments: Tests, quizzes, units of study*

English: Grades 9 through 12

25% Preparation: Homework, participation, preparation (notebook, portfolio)

25% Literature – Tests, quizzes, etc.*

25% Vocabulary, spelling, grammar

25% Composition/Writing*

English: Grades 9 through 12 Honors

- 25% Literature – Tests, quizzes, etc.*
- 25% Vocabulary, spelling, grammar
- 25% Composition/Writing*
- 25% Preparation: Homework, participation, preparation
(notebook, portfolio) and assigned readings.

Composition

- 50% Writing averages
- 25% Journal grade
- 25% Classwork, homework, and portfolio

Middle College Humanities

- 50% Tests and quizzes. A minimum of three tests and three quizzes. (Three quizzes equal one test grade.)
- 20% Individual project (first and third marking periods) or comprehensive college-style examination (second and fourth marking periods).
- 30% Creative project.

Journalism

- 20% Reporter's notebook and class notebook.
- 20% Quizzes, tests or special projects.
- 20% Homework and preparation.
- 40% Articles written.

N.B. Earned assessment tests grades during the second and fourth marking periods will be double weighted and averaged into the tests for those marking periods.

- Assessment of units of study which integrate discrete materials and skills, e.g. thematic units, performance projects (some involving student product such as models, journals, portfolios, etc.), novel and/or drama units, will be accomplished through use of appropriately designed rubrics and grades may be appropriately weighted.