

Academic Boosters Meeting – December 1, 2016

Mr. Kevin Poduska – Chair, English Department

Attachments:

1. [Academic Boosters meeting PowerPoint](#) (maps to sections in these notes)
2. [English Department Goals](#)

Background on Mr. Poduska

- Came from District 214 – John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights; same HS District as Principal Erin Deluga
- Hersey is similar in demographics as York
- Instead of teaching to standardized tests, D214 established a curricular model in which students learned to be successful in the micro skills required for success on the ACT within course content and writing.
- From 1999 to 2015, Cohort ACT composite scores increased from 22.1 to 25.1, which is a median composite growth rate of about 47%. Cohort was made up of juniors who had been at Hersey since their freshman year; they also include ONLY the ACT taken as part of the PSAE—not other tests the students may have taken.
- Focus was on moving all students' skills, across disciplines, levels, grades
- Value added to a middle level student -- 52%

“Evolution” is the keyword

- The York English Department is focused on evolution – continuing to build on the strong and successful programs that are underway and resulting in success for students; no need to start over

What is in place now?

- There was (and remains) a strong, effective focus on cultivating and teaching skills such as writing, grammar, speaking, listening and literacy.
 - York ACT scores have increased (1.2 points) and are at a high
 - Much credit to work in last two years under Ryan Doherty, who previously chaired the Department and is now the Asst. Principal for Curriculum and Instruction
- Consistent and streamlined assessment structure:
 - How we grade, provide feedback and report grades is consistent across department
 - Use of rubrics
 - Focus on student growth
 - Standards-based grading
- Adv. College Program (ACP)
 - Added electives through Indiana University that allow for college credit
 - Composition 101, Literature 101, Speech 101
 - All carry honors weight
 - Families do NOT have to pay the extra fees, optional
 - York works with IU to ensure that courses meet college standards, instructors must meet college teaching standards

Evolutions: Our Goals (future-oriented)

- Eight essential principles determined by department
(see links to [PowerPoint](#) p.9, and [English Department Goals](#))
- Collective efficacy – not only within English, but across other York departments
 - Imagine where student experiences (and skills demanded) in English are consistent and discernibly coherent with those in other classes across social studies, science, and math
 - Using a set of guiding principles across the department which guide what we teach, how we teach, how we collaborate
 - Working toward coherence across the years, as well as within individual classes
 - Classes are rigorous and challenging; citizenship
 - Maximize the kid's experience “do it together” approach.
- Student growth goal
 - Refine and implement a skills spine that promotes growth in reading, writing, literacy, and critical thinking
 - Thinking about growth in many dimensions
 - Growth in critical thinking, growth as skills-based, growth in test scores, growth in argumentation and composition skills
 - Further and accelerate growth in terms of skills through instructional practice:
 - grammar, reading, writing, critical thinking across levels and all 4 years
- Life readiness –
 - Focus on purposeful, sequenced writing program, argumentation and composition with no boundaries, including a focus on all kinds of writing i.e., for content, prose, academic, technical, etc..

New courses for next year in English

- Technical writing
- AP Research – second course of AP Seminar – college research and inquiry skills – STEM work – exam partly scored by instructor

Other new non-English courses (as noted later in the meeting by Mr. Ryan Doherty) include

- 2-D Game Design
- ACP Sociology

Questions / Answers / Comments from parents

- For the most part, parents referenced student experience, and Mr. Poduska assured the group that he would take concerns and suggestions, share with teachers, and continue the dialogue
 - Concern that across the years, students in the same family have very different experiences with different teachers in the same class, i.e., writing demands look very different within the same course depending on who is teaching
 - Concern about lack of timely feedback
 - Concerns about cancellation of writing workshops
 - Concerns about how parents can help students be successful in English

- Concerns about the lack of honors English options for Juniors, as well as lack of honors English courses for Seniors that are not college-level