

## Taylor County Middle School Writing/Communications Program

### SBDM Council

"Each school-based decision making council, or if there is not a council, a committee appointed by the principal shall adopt policies that determine the writing program for its school and submit it to the Department of Education for review and comment." Senate Bill 1, 2009, Sec 2(7)(c)(2)

The SBDM council will be responsible for reviewing and approving the implementation of the writing/communications plan in order to create a school policy for the new program. The policy will require the school to develop a program in which all students have multiple opportunities to develop complex communication skills for a variety of purposes. Other areas of focus will be school teams which are responsible for leading in the development, implementation, monitoring, and review of the program. Additional components will include the following:

- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Feedback
- Formative and summative assessments
- School portfolio system
- Technology
- Language resources
- Annual review
- Professional development
- Administrative support and monitoring
- Communication with parents and the community

### School Writing/Communications Team

It is the responsibility of the School Writing/Communications Team as a whole to discuss the current plan, note the weaknesses, and implement the changes discussed. The School Writing/Communications Team is made up of the following:

- Instructional Supervisor
- School-level Administrator

-Lead Teacher

-Department Chairs

It will be the responsibility of the instructional supervisor to monitor the progress and implementation of the program and to inform the team of the requirements of the program as set forth by Senate Bill 1 and Kentucky Department of Education. It will be the school-level administrator's responsibility to oversee the implementation of the program throughout the school, working with the lead teacher and department chairs. The lead teacher will be responsible for writing and/or revising the plan based on input from the School Writing/Communications Team, presenting the program to the SBDM council, assisting in the implementation of the program, and representing the School Writing/Communications Team on the District Writing/Communications Team. It will be the responsibility of the department chairs to communicate the plan to teachers within his/her department and to implement and monitor the progress of the plan within his/her department.

### **Developing Students' Communication Skills: Curriculum and Instruction**

"Students at all grade levels and across the curriculum will produce a variety of communications, including oral and written texts, multi-modal communications, and communications through technology. Students will produce three text types (addressing Kentucky core Academic Standards): narrative, informative/explanatory, and argumentative texts and will engage in writing to learn, writing to demonstrate learning, and writing for realistic (authentic) audiences."

1. All teachers in all classes in all grades will provide students with writing to learn and writing to demonstrate learning opportunities. This may include, but is not limited to, constructed responses, on-demand writing, content-focused writing, or essay writing. Teachers must provide descriptive feedback to support students' growth as writers. Writing to learn and writing to demonstrate learning must be evidenced in lesson plans and in collected student samples. All teachers will use KCCT-like assessments containing constructed and/or open response items a minimum of twice per nine weeks. These tests are to be submitted to principal.
2. Writing/language teachers will be able to aggressively teach the writing skills set forth in the writing and language standards sections of "Common Core Standards". Writing teachers will focus instruction on narrative, informative/explanatory, and argumentative writing in the forms of letters, articles, editorials and speeches. They will provide students both the opportunity to create these forms in a timed, test-like environment as well as to produce these forms over a period of time during which they use peer, self, and teacher assessment to improve the product and their own skills as writers. To be certain that TCMS students are able to complete the requirements of their Electronic Writing/Communication Portfolios, sixth-grade writing teachers will require students to use computers to produce and save one informative/explanatory and one argumentative piece; seventh-grade writing teachers will require students to use computers to produce and save one informative/explanatory, one argumentative, and one narrative (personal or fictional) piece; and eighth-grade writing

teachers will require students to produce and save one informative/explanatory and one argumentative piece.

3. The school librarian/media specialist is responsible to teach students (in sixth grade) and review students (in seventh and eighth grades) about what it means to plagiarize and to familiarize them with the consequences, according to school policy, of an act of plagiarism. Furthermore, writing teachers are responsible to teach students how to correctly cite sources when using multiple sources of information.

4. Specific cross-curricular opportunities will be provided to our students in order to assure them that they will be able to meet the requirements of the Electronic Writing/Communication Portfolio.

In sixth grade, science teachers (by end of first semester) will require students to create (and save to school network) a content-focused PowerPoint presentation (or presentation using other technology) that requires them to either inform/explain or build an argument. Sixth-grade social studies teachers (by end of first semester) will require students to complete (and save to school network) an on-demand writing (letter, speech, article or editorial) that is content-focused and will require them to inform/explain or build an argument. Sixth-grade art teacher will require students to use narrative skills to write and illustrate a children's book.

In seventh grade, social studies teachers (by end of first semester) will require students to create (and save to school network) a content-focused PowerPoint presentation (or presentation using other technology) that requires them to inform/explain, build an argument, or narrate. Seventh-grade art teacher will require students to create a film/commercial that builds an argument.

In eighth grade, health/pe teacher will require students to complete (and save to school network) an on-demand writing (letter, speech, article or editorial) that is content-focused and will require them to inform/explain or build an argument. Eighth-grade science teacher (by end of first semester) will require students to complete (and save to school network) an analytical writing such as a lab report. Eighth-grade art and music teacher will require students to write (and save to computer) an art critique and music or theatre review, respectively.

5. Oral communication opportunities will be provided for our students. In addition, to the PowerPoint/other technology presentations outlined in the previous section of this document, all teachers should encourage student growth in the areas of speaking and listening. All teachers in all classes should provide opportunities for students to present orally in front of peers and/ or to participate in other forms of communication such as class discussions (i.e. Socratic Seminar, Shared Inquiry Discussion, Inside/Outside Circles) debates, speeches, small group presentations, oral art critiques and peer reviews etc., where students are taught to follow listening and speaking protocols. Students, then, need to be provided descriptive feedback about their

Writing and reading teachers also use surround-sound microphone systems when teaching, which enhances student listening. Students use microphone system when making presentations or sharing aloud written work. All writing and reading teachers and most other teachers have document cameras, SmartBoard or ActivBoard technologies that are used to enhance student listening. Students use these technologies, and in some cases ActivSlates and presentation clickers, to create and make presentations as well.

In addition to Read Write Gold, students with exceptional needs in the area of reading have a multitude of audio books and appropriate headsets available. Seventh-grade reading teachers use a library of nonfiction, Plugged in to Reading, that is available on audio for student use. Sixth-grade reading teachers utilize Reading Plus, a program that improves reading fluency by starting students on their reading level then progressing them as they level-up.

Teachers are to record use of technology in weekly lesson plans. Use of technology to enhance learning in the classroom is part of each teacher's evaluation process.

### **School Writing/Communication Portfolio**

"Contents of the student writing portfolio at each grade level shall indicate that students are developing communication skills for a variety of purposes and audiences in a variety of forms/modes. For the school's portfolio and the school's program, "writing" will be defined broadly to include oral and written texts, multi-modal communications, and communications through technology. School portfolios are a required part of the school's instructional program."

Each Taylor County Middle School student will have and submit work to an Electronic Writing/Communications Portfolio that will be accessible for review by teachers and administrators. To help monitor the implementation of the writing program and to help monitor the growth of students as communicators, each Taylor County Middle School student will be required to contribute to his/her Writing/Communications Portfolio on an annual basis. Students will be allowed to choose work samples for inclusion in this portfolio, yet he/she will be required to meet the following minimal requirements:

At each grade, students must submit one piece of narrative writing, one piece of argumentative writing, and one piece of informative/explanatory writing, one sample of oral communication, and one sample of multi-media communication.

At the end of each school year, during a designated Early Release Friday, homeroom teachers will check to see if their assigned students have completed the requirements of the portfolio. They will report their findings to the administration.

Students will then evaluate their own communication growth in order to set goals as a communicator. Parents will be invited to take place in this process. On a given night, the school will host an event in which parents of sixth, seventh and eighth graders are invited to share their Electronic Writing/Communications Portfolios with their families. And, with the help of a parent, students will set

goals for upcoming year. In lieu of a parent, students will have the assistance of a community member, teacher, or portfolio pal from the university, to assist in goal setting.

### **Feedback and Assessment**

Teachers will use the Kentucky Analytical Scoring Guide (or portions therein) to score student on-demand writing and other narrative, argumentative or informative/explanatory writing. Teachers will provide descriptive feedback for students in order to promote growth in specific areas of need.

Teachers will provide students with rubrics and models prior to an oral presentation, writing task, graded discussion, multi-media presentation, etc. and make the expectation of one's performance clear. Teachers will provide descriptive feedback for oral presentations, suggesting to students what their weaknesses and strengths are as a speaker.

Writing teachers will use formative and summative assessments to assess students as writers and speakers. These assessments will be evidenced in weekly lesson plans and will be focused on the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts.

The reading and language arts portion of MAPS testing will be given three times a year, and it will be analyzed by writing teachers. Teachers will use analysis of MAPS to drive language instruction.

### **Professional Development**

After annual review of writing plan by School Writing/Communication Team and/or state, school leaders will determine a new vision for the School Writing and Communication Program. From this vision, they will determine the professional growth needs of teachers and set professional development activities that would reflect that vision.

Lead teachers will support colleagues by sharing information and resources. He/she will continue to attend meetings about new standards roll-out and disseminate information to teachers. All writing teachers will assist colleagues in other contents as they implement program in their classrooms.

### **Administrative Support and Monitoring**

It is the administrator's responsibility to oversee and support the School Writing/Communication Plan. The principal, assistant principal, and other administrators responsible for teacher evaluations and walk-throughs will look for evidence of implementation of the program in teacher lesson plans and collected student samples (i.e. appropriate types of writing, grading practices, use of technology, use of

appropriate resources, formative and summative assessments, modifications for exceptional children, etc.).

The administrator will help provide appropriate language resources, technology, positive school climate, and professional development opportunities for teachers so that they can carry out the program requirements.

The administrator will participate in the annual review of the program referring to state regulation, standards and program guidelines while doing so.

Administration will, with the help of the lead teacher and School Writing/Communication Team, conduct a yearly or bi-yearly learning check to assess where students are in terms of the ability to write proficiently in an on-demand setting.