



MANCHESTER REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Haledon, New Jersey 07508
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(A Best Practices School)



Office of the Principal

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BACKGROUND:

The three most important assessments that a modern high school student will take are the Pre-Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC). The PARCC assessment will be based on the Common Core State Standards. New Jersey, along with over forty other states, has opted to embrace the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards represent a uniform set of specific skills that should be the focus of instruction at each grade level. Moreover, the College Board, the organization that creates the PSAT and SAT, has announced that they will begin to alter the structure of the PSAT and SAT test so that their tests more closely follow the Common Core State Standards guidelines. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we create an English Curricula that best prepares our students to master the Common Core State Standards.

Traditional high school English curricula featured a strong focus on a chronological study of literature based on a geographic region. This is why it is likely that we have all taken courses in high school and college entitled American Literature, European Literature or World Literature. Although there is certainly a merit to studying a geographic regions literature chronologically, certain aspects of the PARCC assessment make it wise to rethink and remold these traditional structures at Manchester.

STATUS:

Based on research we have completed on the PARCC and the Common Core State Standards we see that students will be asked to read three texts that are between 2-4 pages long, find common themes within these texts, and use the evidence that they find within the text as their parameters to create and support an argument. The three texts that are given to the students will be complex texts and they will likely have been written by some of the most noteworthy authors to have ever lived. Additionally, the texts are likely to have been written in different time periods and will likely have been written in various geographic regions.

Traditional English curriculum focused on the complete reading of between six to eight novels a year. This style of curricula only allows for students to have read about thirty or so books upon completion of their high school years. As we all know, the scope of the American Canon, the European Canon, and the World Canon is much greater and we are currently only exposing our students to a small sampling of great literature. This is especially problematic considering the PARCC has released copies of their recommended texts for each grade level and the scope of literature that our students will be expected to be familiar with is much greater than the scope provided by previous English curricula.

RECOMMENDATION:

The adaptation of the presented revised English curricula for English I, II, and III will prepare our students for the challenges of the PSAT, SAT, and PARCC to a much higher degree. Instead of a geographical/chronological approach to studying literature, we will create thematic based units. These thematic units will be focused upon an essential question, and upon completion of each thematic unit the students must create an argument for or against the essential question by using evidence found within the texts provided for each unit.

Each grade level curriculum features an anchor text (usually a novel) and two-four page excerpts from almost all of the authors featured in the PARCC Foundations recommended reading list. These excerpts will mirror the excerpts that are likely to be seen on the PSAT, SAT, and PARCC because they are written at a high level of lexicology, are of similar length, and they can also be tied together with the thread of a common theme.

Adopting an English curriculum based on thematic units while also placing a tremendous focus on standards based instruction will serve our students well. Furthermore, adopting this curriculum will place us ahead of the curve as compared to other school districts. It is my belief that all districts will eventually see that remodeling their English curriculum in this manner and adopting a curriculum that seeks to expose our students to excerpts from a wide variety of famous authors is the logical move in order to best prepare our students for college and career readiness.

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