

GC High School Curriculum Meeting Notes

March 27, 2019

Meeting Attendees:

Mrs. McLaughlin, Mr. Esposito, Ronda D'Antonio, Joyce Turner, Joelle Mackey, Joellen Crowley, Gail Madigan, Alaine Lawlor

- **Curriculum Coordinator Responses regarding amount of work assigned over the summer and during school breaks:**
 - Summer assignments: posted in mid-June

As you know, we all have summer assignments in our respective departments. The assignments originated in each of our departments for a variety of reasons -- in some cases, it was the PTA that requested students be provided with material to review over the summer.

Over the last ten years the assignments in each our departments have evolved -- books have been changed to try to appeal to a broader spectrum of interest and ability or to reflect contemporary scholarship and issues; fewer books are required in English than in years past; regents social studies classes no longer require a book but opt for a current event assignment instead, and teachers provide support materials to aid and help focus students.

About four years ago, we all added a "rationale" to our summer reading assignments to explain why an assignment or book was selected for a particular course. All teachers devote some time at the beginning of the school year to discussing and reviewing what was required over the summer. In most of our classes, there is an assessment/grade associated with the summer assignment -- it could be a homework, quiz or test grade (it is consistent in each course). We find most students perform well and earn a good grade on the summer assessment because of how teachers integrate the summer assignment into their first week of instruction.

We do not expect students to develop new skills through a summer assignment -- many assignments provide students with an opportunity to review and practice skills so that they don't lose them over the summer (this is especially true in Math and World Language). In the honors and AP courses, students are often asked to get a jump start on an early unit so they might read about something

that is new to them. They are not, however, tested on that information cold -- teachers use that as a basis for lessons early in the year.

It is hard to put a time frame on an assignment as reading speed and ability can vary greatly. Students who are moving up a level for the first time will likely have to devote more time to an assignment than students who have always been in Honors or AP level classes. For AP students, in particular, we think learning to manage AP summer assignments over the two-month-long summer break simulates what they will have to do when they go to college.

When we talk to kids about summer assignments to get their feedback, we don't get the sense that they think any of the assignments are particularly hard. What we hear is that they leave them all to the last minute and that is why they feel overwhelmed at the end of the summer. To mitigate this, we have tried to counsel kids on how to approach the summer assignments, but procrastination is a tough urge to battle.

- Work over breaks:

Social Studies:

Regarding work over breaks, the vast majority of teachers do not assign work over school vacations. That said, some teachers do occasionally give an assignment (reading, review materials for midterms or AP exams, Castle Learning) over a break. If there is a specific concern in a specific course or with a specific teacher, that would be helpful to know so that I could gather information related to the concern.

I foresee the April break being a potential issue because it is so late and close to the AP exams. Review materials are distributed in most AP classes in April -- students will likely work on those materials over the break. In most cases, kids do not HAVE to complete review work over the break -- they have from the moment they received the materials (usually in advance of the break) to the day they are due to complete them. As we know, kids procrastinate -- despite being given ample time to do things, some will wait until the last minute or last night of a vacation to do something they have had weeks to do.

World Language:

In WL, we do not give projects over the vacations as that is family time. I review grades throughout the semester and then do department statistics at the

end of each quarter. Teachers are usually within a few points of one another to ensure that there are not discrepancies amongst teachers who teach the same level/course. Also, I collect exams and review them. I am aware how teachers are testing, formats and I make suggestions.

Math:

Depending upon the break, the math department either gives no assignment or an assignment equivalent to a standard homework assignment. The Summer Practice Assignment (provided through CastleLearning.com) is just for practice, is not counted toward a grade and provides helpful instructional data.

English:

Summer assignment was modified last year or two - students read a pretty accessible text and prepare for a Socratic Seminar (with enough time to ask questions upon return in the fall)

Homework is essential and assigned in order to reinforce the work in the classroom. It is not always a heavy load during breaks. (Otherwise, we would need some specifics).

The curricular work that we do provides us with the stellar results and good standing (with colleges:))

● **Evaluation of coursework across sections**

- Data from sections of the same class taught by different teachers is analyzed quarterly
- Types of assignments and assessments are evaluated on an on-going, regular basis and reviewed during staff development and course level meetings
- Every quarter courses are evaluated across levels for differences in grades from teacher to teacher
- English – Grades are reviewed and teachers among sections are in alignment. Core titles are consistent – ancillary materials may vary. Writing benchmark – quarterly are the same
- Midterm/final exams are consistent across grade levels

● **Course Selection**

- When students make course selections, they are asked to list three choices for electives. Students will not be contacted if one of their three choices of electives are available.

- We do two course selection verification mailings- one at the end of April and the other at the end of the school year. This is when/how students are notified if there are changes.
- If a counselor has a significant issue- conflict etc., students will be contacted.

- **Canvas Update**

- Approximately 70 Teachers are involved in the Canvas pilot program and approximately 58 logged in over the last week.
- One teacher is currently using Canvas with students to post homework assignments
- Staff Developer is on site every Tuesday plus part time on Thursdays for drop in time
- 15 hour online training Canvas course available
- Possible Bootcamp sessions or summer training for teachers
- Goal is to have every teacher posting homework assignments via Canvas in the fall 2019
- Interface with SchoolTool is in progress and will follow

- **School Budget**

- Due to low enrollment, the following elective courses will not be offered during 2019-2020:

Course # Course

1291	Journalism
1540	College Scene Study and Analysis
1647	Myths and Legends
1649	Culture of the Sixties
2510	Criminal Justice
3560	Advanced Programming – Java H
3590	Statistics through Sports
3810	Advanced Visual BASIC H
4775	Oceanography
6412	College Essentials for a Healthy College Experience
8530	AP Music Theory
3500	AP Computer Science
4725	AP Environmental Science

- No clubs are in danger of being cut.