**Team Action Report Form**

**SMART 2011-2012 Academic Year Report**
(Copy this form into a word processing document, update it, and then submit it to Project SMART, marcia.burrell@oswego.edu)

| Team Members: Eric Olson, Barb Boland, Suzanne DeTore, Kate Foley, Alana Groth, Nancy Martin |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Name <em>(For example, Delaware Elementary)</em>: Henninger High School</th>
<th>Write the number of Teacher participants for each period.</th>
<th>Academic Year #’s</th>
<th>Both Summer &amp; Year #’s</th>
<th>Summer Institute #’s</th>
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| Team location and focus *(For example, Delaware—ESL literacy)*: Henninger High School, Syracuse – Effective teaching strategies to increase student performance on high stakes science, math and ELA exams, Data analysis of Regents’ Benchmarking examinations, discussion of teacher assessment including Danielson observation model and Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA), discussion and role play of student management case studies |

Data collected and analyzed on teacher learning *(For example, faculty surveys, and teacher reflective journals)*:
- Data Analysis of Benchmarking and year-end data from Earth Science, Living Environment and Geometry Regents exams.
- Reflection of teaching based on data analysis – what areas need to be revamped and what areas worked well.
- Construction, implementation and observation of inquiry modules to enhance instruction
- Teacher Reflections
- Field Trips to the Everson Museum and the MOST to connect instruction to community resources.

Teacher Reflections 2012 (as on June 14th)

Suzanne De Tore-Wilsey
Henninger High School

Personal Reflection Project SMART 2011-2012
This year found our school in the Persistently Low Achieving (PLA) status. As a PLA school the state has identified that we have a lower than NY state norm graduation rate. One good result of our being in the PLA is the requirement of Benchmarks. The idea of occasionally requiring the students to take a district created test seemed daunting, yet the idea of obtaining data on student progress was encouraging.

Through Project SMART meetings we were able to have time away from classes to discuss the data obtained. The participants of project SMART were also able to discuss the appropriateness of the benchmark questions for all students. Henninger High School/Syracuse City School District required that we have the students participate in four benchmark exams. At the conclusion of each benchmark exam...
we evaluated the data for each class within disciplines and evaluating data at similar grade levels.

During our sessions we discussed teaching techniques related to benchmark questions. Evaluation of technique and student grades helped me to obtain some insight on new or alternative teaching. I was able through the benchmarks and our sessions to improve my teaching.

Our discussions also covered the frustrating issues of teaching English Language Learner (ELL) students. The common frustration was our inability to communicate with the students who could yet speak English, as a group we explored techniques that could improve our communication. Some discussions were aligned to our frustration as teachers feeling we were not properly equipped to provide for our ELL students. We also discussed that some benchmark questions were “unfair” to our ELL students, for example they were unacquainted with the Adirondack Mountains. Through our discussions I was able to gain not only insight but also information to begin providing a better education for our ELL students.

Project SMART has also continued to provide a professor who keeps current with scientific literature, techniques as well as offering varied perspectives, all of which help me to critically analyze my teaching.

The culmination of all discussions and activities of Henninger High School Project SMART has had a positive impact on my teaching skills and therefore a positive impact on current and future students.

Kate Rood  
Project Smart 2011-2012

Over the course of the 2011-2012 school year, our group looked at the benchmark testing, collaboration, ESL students and the Danielson Rubric. We looked at these topics so that we could be more effective teachers and leaders in our building. This year has brought a lot of change for Henninger and it was comforting and reassuring to have this time with colleagues to reflect on our practices.

We spent quite a bit of time analyzing the benchmark data this year. During the course of the school year, we gave our students four benchmark exams that were supposed to be given quarterly. The intention of the benchmark exams was to allow the students and the teachers to gauge the learning thus far. After the benchmarks were given the school held data meeting where the results were analyzed and plans were made for the future to address student needs. After the meetings at school, we continued to talk and discuss our results with our Project Smart group. I found that these additional discussions helped me make modifications to my lessons and dig deeper into my data.

We also spent time discussing ESL students and how to effectively meet their needs in the classroom. We spent time developing plans and activities to reach our ESL students and we worked on the science course pathway for these students. In addition, we spent time looking at the Danielson Rubric and I feel our discussions helped to make the evaluative transition this year. Our discussions helped us to examine the rubric so that were no surprises later on.
This year, during Project Smart, we spent a lot of time discussing the SCSD benchmarks that were given throughout the school year. The benchmarks were given quarterly, and for all math classes had a 30% weight towards the students overall grade. As a team, we looked at each question and discussed the student’s success rate. We also discussed the common misconceptions that students may have had, and strategies for re-teaching.

Another major topic of discussion was the new teacher evaluation model that the SCSC had adopted this past winter. This model is all about the evidence. This model was brand new for all of us teachers and it came with a lot of questions and concerns. As a team, we discussed the questions that we had and the concerns that worried us. I felt comfort in sharing my experiences with team, and I hope that they felt the same.

Micromanaging student behavior and organization was a topic we kept going back to. We talked about policies, and strategies that we each used within our classrooms to make things more manageable. Tardiness of students was a major issue that each of us struggled with, especially during first block. Together we brainstormed ideas in which to handle this particular situation. Many of us used “secret words” for students that were on time, and they would then receive extra credit on that day’s assessment.

June 18, 2012

Barbara C Boland
Henninger High School
Syracuse, N.Y. 13206
Reflection: Project SMART 2011-2012 school year

There have been many changes made this year at Henninger High School. The school has been designated PLA and is in the redesign process. We have a new, more instructionally focused administrative team and the teachers are being evaluated using the Danielson’s Framework. The changes are moving us in a more positive direction, however it has been stressful on the teachers and the students.

Another change is that we are using 4 benchmark exams, to analyze the data and guide our instruction. This has been the basis for our conversations during project SMART with Dr Olsen as facilitator. We examined our data and had many fruitful discussions regarding what prior knowledge the students might be missing, what their thinking processes might have been and how to better interpret the data. We also discussed the impact of the “means” of gathering this data. The benchmark exams cost us 1 or 2 blocks a marking period and a day to review with the exception of the last one. The last benchmark was a practice regents and some of the material was not yet covered. In summation, the idea is sound, however the means must further be examined.

Eric also facilitated discussions in which we examined the new “Danielson” evaluation tool and our experience with it. We found that many of the parameters were based on student behaviors and choices, in addition to how the teacher reacted to them. We agreed that a student’s behavior is that student’s
choice and this aspect is beyond a teacher’s control. It also led us to discuss positive student-teacher interactions that may increase motivation and cooperation. This topic is complex and loaded with emotion and perception, Eric’s input often shifted our perspective on things.

This year has brought us a great deal of ELL students, also. The students that are greater than 1st year are often successful due to their work ethic, ability to maintain attention and focus, and basic respect in the classroom. They have not been contaminated by the attitude that teachers are villains and that the grades are given to them not “earned”. I wouldn’t mind a class full of them. We had discussions regarding how they have been put into regular education classrooms and how to better manage them.

Teaching is a difficult profession to do well and extremely difficult in an urban population. The difficulties in these children’s lives bring so many variables to learning. The study group has been useful as a venue for us as teachers to process this stressful and very difficult year. It is easy to blame urban culture for education’s problems and hard to believe that changing student relations or teacher instruction can make a difference in student achievement. Eric always encouraged us to move forward.

Nancy Martin

This year has been a series of changes. The biggest change that I encountered in the classroom has been the benchmarks. I feel the benchmarks kept the students “honest”. I feel it was a reality check. What I mean by this is that the students had a good understanding on where they stood in regards to passing the regents.

There were some surprises; some students did better than they did in the benchmark. For the most part the benchmark exam grades were reflected in their regent’s grade.

For next year I would like to find some way of encouraging students who do not do well on the benchmarks to come in for help. I want to examine different strategies to help improve their grade. My main concern is that they get discouraged and quit trying, especially if they have passed the Living Environment Regents.

For teacher evaluations: I feel the Danielson model may be a step in the right direction but my biggest concern is that it does not take into consideration the age of the students and the course they are in. It is not fair to compare a teacher who teaches a freshman course with those teachers who teach a Supa-course.
Data collected and analyzed on student learning (For example, annual literacy assessments/NYS report
card disaggregated data for 4th grade ELA, analysis of rubric scores on students writing samples each
quarter for students in versus not in the program).

- Data Analysis of Earth Science, Living Environment and Geometry Regents exams.
- Advance planning for inquiry units and classroom observation
- Itemized analysis of questions – which helped to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses of
  the students, this year due to the availability benchmarking data, teachers were able to imbed
  focused review of concepts students were deficient in.
- Student reflections of learning, rubrics for projects and activities.
- Student artifacts of student learning which led to group discussions and reflections.

In conducting the year-end analysis of student Regents data several clear trends emerged regarding
student performance. Factors significantly influencing student performance included: attendance,
dedication to task, willful disregard for instruction, issues of student literacy, student and administrative
generated instructional interruptions, dedicated effort and student emotional and security needs

Suzanne DeTore year end pass rate for Living Environment Regents: 42%
Kate Rood year end pass rate for Living Environment Regents: 72%
Barb Boland year end pass rate for Living Environment Regents: 48%
Alana Groth year end pass rate for Geometry Regents: 49%
Nancy Martin year end pass rate for Earth Science Regents: 63%

Analysis of student data

Low Performing students:

Failures on the Regents Exam included the majority of ESL students. Analysis of individual student
data showed that better test accommodation and better communication with the proctors of the exam
could have significantly helped student performance. There was evidence of incomplete exams despite
students being encouraged to “write something.” It was clear from looking at student work, that they
struggle with multiple linguistic challenges in parsing science and mathematics content questions.
Several students seemed to have given up on trying to complete the exam, leaving multiple short answer
questions blank. There were specific issues with the use of technology during the exam, multiple
students needed to use the computer at the same time.

It is particularly concerning how students seem to be “programming themselves for failure” throughout
the school year. Teachers noted attendance and maturity issues among low-performing students. Failing
students typically choose to “disrupt, laugh and giggle” than to engage in instruction. Lack of parental
concern and organization were major themes that emerged from the analysis.

- Student 1 failed with a 62% despite a last minute effort to “cram it in”
- Student 2 failed with a 42% was highlighted as a student who, though capable of a correct understanding chose to disengage throughout the year and was a constant disruption to class.
- Student 2, 4, and 5 - three students who were highlighted as consistently failing to engage in class and who would use advisement as an opportunity to socially engage the teacher, rather than develop content understanding.
- Students with I.E.P’s and immature/underperforming students typically failed the test. Most of these students would have been place in and benefitted from a “Survey of Science” class that is no longer offered. Omecca was specifically noted as a student who floundered all year in the Regents curriculum and could have benefited from more loosely structured coursework.
- Poor test taking skills including high, anxiety, lack of task persistence and low level of content integration were noted as significantly effecting achievement.

Marginally Performing students

This set of students passed the Regents Exam with a low score. In some cases barely passing was judged to be over-performance by a few students, this was typically ascribed to a significant last minute effort to study and participate in review sessions. In some cases students were judged to be underperforming at this level, this was typically ascribed to high anxiety, lack of content integration and poor test taking skills.

Specific characteristics emerged from discussion of students who passed the exam with a low score

- Student 6, 7, and 8 were highlighted as students who benefited from a last minute effort. Their taking productive advantage of advisement for additional opportunities for instruction made a big difference in their passing.
- Student 9 and 10 were highlighted as student who started the year off with a immature attitudes, inappropriate behaviors and underperformance, but who progressed steadily during the year and were finally able to pass the test.
- ESL student who passed the test showed a tremendous work ethic and dedication to learning both a new language and mastering the content.

High Performing Students

Trends noted among high performers (>85%) were regular and enthusiastic classroom attendance, a high degree of organizational skill and the desire to communicate effectively with the teacher. Students all showed a high level of maturity and dedication to the task of learning. High levels of parental involvement and concern were a significant trend noted by the teachers. High achievers also were seen to engage more effectively in review sessions and took the material “more seriously.”

- Student 11 was noted as somewhat of a “shocker” in getting 90% on the test. She came to Henninger mid-year from a program for violent offenders, regular advisement, high level of guardian concern and effective online tutoring were all ascribed as significant factors in this achievement.
- Student 12 (one of the few high performing ESL students) was noted for his consistently high work ethic and positive attitude in class.

Revised 9/1/10