**Project Smart Team Action Report Form**

**Using Common Core Learning Standards & Data to Improve Student Achievement**

**2012 - 2013**

Teacher(s)/School:  Hannibal High School

SUNY Oswego faculty member:  Sharon Kane

Teacher Participant Names:  Brad Fetes, Michelle Prince, Stephanie Sweeney, Nicole Erkan, Krystal Ward, Courtney Best, Marc Copani, Kristina Licatese, Marie Stroup (librarian)

Project or Team Name:  Hannibal High Inquiry Group

Please answer the following questions:

**Action**: Describe your CCLS project. Which CCLS standards will you target?

The Inquiry Group read and discussed several professional books and trade books. Each member also completed a self-initiated project that connected to implementing the Common Core ELA and Literacy Standards for Science, Social Studies and the Technical Areas. (Specific reflections will follow.) Some members visited each other’s classrooms and participated in cross-disciplinary, collaborative teaching. Several teachers presented at QUEST. Our overall goal was to enhance the culture of literacy in the school.

**Rationale**: Fully state your rationale for the project. Why is this work important?

Our overall goal was to enhance the culture of literacy throughout the school. We knew it was important to model good reading practices and to make visible that teachers can be avid readers in terms of both professional growth and pleasure reading. We also recognized that each teacher needed to make his or her own reading visible in the classroom, to display books related to the curriculum and beyond, and to invite students to read for pleasure.

**Responsibilities/Timeline**: Identify a series of action steps you will take to complete your project. Next to each step, identify person(s) responsible for carrying out that task. For each step also identify your timeline (during what month(s) you plan to complete each step).

- In our weekly meetings from January-June, we discussed several books, including *Readicide* (Gallagher), *Bomb* (Sheinkin), *Gossamer* (Lowry) *Love Is Stronger than Hate* (Gibbs), *Unwind* (Shusterman) and *Unwholly* (Shusterman).

- The teachers in the inquiry group often addressed issues related to poverty, and created their projects related to the Common Core Standards with the needs of their students in mind. They aimed for engagement and increased motivation. They had copies of Calkins’ *Pathways to the Common Core* to use as a reference.

- Teachers displayed books in their classrooms and gave book talks to classes and to individual students. They used various strategies to listen to students’ interests and concerns about books and reading in general.

- Marie Stroup (librarian participant) and Sharon went into classrooms to give book talks related to curricular topics.

- Teachers visited each other’s classrooms and co-taught interdisciplinary lessons. See reflections below for specific details.

- Representatives from within and beyond our group presented at QUEST in April.
### Evaluation:
What data will you collect that shows the impact of your project on student achievement of CCLS? How will you document student learning? Teacher learning?

Teachers used action research strategies to observe changes in their students. Specific examples of findings follow.

### Resources:
What resources will you need for this project? What costs, if any, will be incurred? What are possible sources of funding for needed resources?

We were able to utilize the professional books and trade books purchased through PDS funds, as well as the copies of the Calkins books that Project SMART provided.

### Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:
We examined our reflections on the 6 shifts, and CCLS and found the following: (Support each claim with examples/evidence)

Highlights include Marie being astounded at how her efforts at promoting nonfiction in the library paid off; Nicole learning the benefits of incorporating young adult literature in her ESL classes; Michelle taking steps to incorporate a writing workshop model in history classes; Krystal finding benefits in inviting teachers of other disciplines into her science classroom; Stephanie reporting learning much about the CCLS “Staircase of Complexity” and differentiated instruction; Courtney learning ways to survey students about their reading preferences and then supplying books that match their interests, and conducting projects allowing for student choice; and Marc incorporating literature into several history units.

(Further details can be found in the reflections at the end of this report.)

### Analysis of Data on Student Learning:
We examined student reactions to teacher behaviors and instructional strategies, as well as library circulation numbers and found positive reactions that indicate we are making progress toward our goal of enhancing the culture of literacy throughout the school.

Marie Stroup checked the library circulation numbers, and reported that the number of nonfiction books taken out from the high school library increased by 65.5% this school year. (As part of her project, she also worked toward her goal of increasing nonfiction reading in kindergarten. Circulation of nonfiction at that level increased 555% this year.)

Several teachers in the group said that they see evidence of some students showing more interest in books. Students have been witnessed recommending books to each other, and asking teachers for book recommendations. On Sharon’s last day in Kristina’s classroom, one student pulled out a sheet of paper with 3 books she intended to read that her Spanish teacher (Kristina Licatise) had talked about in class. The student also said she was in the middle of reading *Unwind*, though this was not required for her class.

Sharon got reports from the 2 teachers and 2 student teachers who taught *Unwind* saying that most students enjoyed the book, and some went on to read the sequel (*Unwholly*) on their own.

Sharon compiled a list of more than a dozen teachers and staff members outside the Inquiry Group who read *Unwind* after hearing it talked about by their peers. There was lively and ongoing discussion of the book in the Teachers’ Room.

Courtney compared student responses on survey questions given in September and again in June, reporting evidence of positive changes. (Details follow.)
Reflections from Members of the Inquiry Group

Marie Stroup Project SMART Reflection

Here are some numbers for you!

At the HS:

From last school year (11-12) to this school year (12-13), the nonfiction collection (excluding manga) increased in circulation by 65.5%.

Also, the most circulated item this year was Bomb by Steve Sheinkin, with 23 loans this year. 12 members of the HS faculty/staff read it. 2 members of the middle school faculty/staff read it. Faculty/staff members of the following departments read it: English, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Language, and Library. I have witnessed students recommending it to each other.

Bomb is also now in a three-way tie for 5th place among the most circulated items in the library for the last 3 years (our circulation system is 3 years old).

At the elementary school:

This year I added another nonfiction unit for the Kindergarten classes. I hoped to see an increase in circulation among nonfiction books among Kindergarten students.

Circulation of Nonfiction books among Kindergarten students has increased 555% from last year to this year, and has increased 1585% from 2 years ago to this year. This seems drastic because it was rare for them to take out nonfiction books and now they are using that collection more. For instance, in the 10-11 school year, only 7 nonfiction books were checked out to Kindergarten students. Granted, the beginning numbers are low, but there was a big difference from the last two years to this year.

The two areas where I was really emphasizing the nonfiction collections were HS and Kindergarten, so those were the two areas I really analyzed the circulation of nonfiction materials.

Now that I feel that my efforts this year have really paid off, I will really continue to highlight the nonfiction collections next year.

Nicole Erkan Project SMART Reflection

My project focused on integrating literature (both fiction and non-fiction) into my curriculum.

* In Spanish 4, students read children's stories about Diego Rivera in both Spanish and English - and then spoke in regards to what was learned as part of a Jigsaw activity.

* Spanish 4 students also completed a few sessions of SSR (Sustained Silent Reading). During these sessions, students read books in Spanish at their appropriate level then completed a report about it which was then discussed in both Spanish and English. Students benefited immensely from these sessions as they learned and were interested in the books.

* In Spanish 3, students read the poem "Instantes" by Jorge Luis Borges. This poem was read as a class, a
video was seen that read and illustrated (brought life to) the poem, students closely read a specified stanza from the poem and finally spoke in regards to that. In interpreting the poem, students created a poster in which they told what they would do different in life.

* Spanish 3 students also read an interpretation of the short story "Como agua para chocolate" ("Like Water for Chocolate"). Students read for meaning and therefore comprehension questions were answered after the reading. Students analyzed the poem to determine the context for writing the story and how it relates to Hispanic culture.

* In my ESL classes, young adult literature in English was incorporated into the curriculum. Students read the books "the Hunger Games", "Never Fall Down" and "Gossamer" among others. Non-fiction books were presented and explored as well as students were learning about certain global topics such as the Vietnam War (7/8 grade ELA CC modules).

The literature presented was received very positively (more so than expected). Students were able to read for meaning and use context clues to develop their language proficiency and literacy skills.

Next year I will be a fulltime Spanish 2 and 4 teacher. I would like to focus on integrating literature into each thematic unit of study. This would help bring meaning and relevance to the units as well as make them more efficient in the scope/sequence and the progression of language skill development. My goal for the summer is to identify the thematic units to be taught (new curriculum) and books/literature that would be appropriate.

Thank you for all of your hard work this year Sharon. You have been a gift to us all and I sincerely appreciate all of the wisdom and guidance you have offered!

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Krystal Ward Project SMART Reflection

This is my 2nd year in participating in a project smart course and it was my favorite. I spent well over the forty hours reading, planning activities, and interacting with my colleagues in a setting that wasn't the typical lunch time venting but a rich literature discussion. I found myself spending less time complaining and more time asking others what they thought of the current book we were reading. I find myself talking to students more about books as well. Some of my students would tease me about spoiling the ending before I reached it and I would do the same the rare occasions I would be ahead. It was interesting to see their opinion on different topics. The hype grew and we even got the other teacher in the room to jump on the reading bandwagon and talked too. I gave practice regents in class last week and four students pulled out books to read when they finished early, one of the students earlier in the year typically put their head down after tests.

Two specific projects that I did are described below. I also worked with Courtney Best on a research project looking at female scientists.

The Lorax Project

During the ecology unit students read The Lorax by Dr. Sues. They answered ecology questions about the story and then created a sequel to the story. Stories were presented and displayed in the room. Dr. Kane gave a book talk on The Legacy of Luna by Julia Hill.
Cloning

Students did an oral debate to establish a law of cloning. After their extensive discussion on the topic Dr. Kane and Mrs. Stroup came in and did a book talk/presentation on different books that had a cloning or genetic engineering theme.

Michelle Prince Project SMART Course Reflection/Individual Project Summary

Project SMART offered me the opportunity to explore a variety of avenues relating to the education field. Through our active discussions on topics including the Common Core Standards, literacy across the content area, and increasing reading throughout the school I gained an array of knowledge and contributed my own knowledge to the program. As a whole group, we held book discussions on Unwind, Unwholly, Bomb, Readicide. Furthermore, for Hannibal’s Anti-Bullying Conference Day we read Love Hate by Brooks Gibbs and watched a screening of the film Bully.

In regard to my own personal goals, I created literacy strands to weave through each unit of instruction based on the Common Core Standards. This task first appeared to be difficult and time consuming but became second nature as I continued. At the beginning of the course, my main focus centered around writing instruction but as the year progressed I implemented both reading and writing strategies. As I planned my units of study I made sure to incorporate literacy in daily activities. Research demonstrates that literacy instruction for all students should be based on explicit modeling, with a gradual release of responsibility until students are able to successfully complete tasks independently. One component of the literacy strands included in class writing workshops which allowed students individual and small group instruction on the DBQ and Thematic Essay. I worked closely with a practicum student from SUNY Oswego’s Adolescence Education program.

Students should be provided with a strong foundation of literacy skills in order to be successful both in and outside of school. I plan my instruction with the overall objective that a high school graduate will have the skillset necessary to qualify for and succeed in their future schooling or employment. The Project SMART course provided the time and support to achieve my goals.

Stephanie Sweeney Project SMART Reflection

I believe that this course was extremely beneficial for both the teachers as lifelong learners and the students. I feel that this course ensured colleague collaboration that was across all content. It also provided us as educators with a variety of young adult novels that we can recommend to our students. For this course my main goal was to incorporate common core readings into a differentiated classroom (13 students with IEPs, 9 general education students). Through our class discussion, reading assignments and colleague collaboration I was able to increase interest and confidence in difficult texts.

Incorporating Common Core into a diverse classroom:

As a first year teacher I was not aware of the levels of text complexity that were designated to 9th grade students. I also was not aware that I would be teaching students in the same classroom that have 10-11th grade reading levels and 3-4th grade reading levels. For the first few months of school reading assignments and activities in the classroom were difficult. I would have some students finish immediately while others would take double the time or many times would not even finish. I have 3 adults in my classroom, one special education teacher, one teacher assistant and myself however at times it felt like that was not enough.
**Strategy:** Through research and discussion I figured out that I need to make reading a less stressful task and I need to incorporate choice into my reading assignments. I came up with a 3 group reading structure and tried to incorporate this lesson at least 2-3 times per unit (normally for DBQ writing, personal account/journals/ graphic novels, worksheet readings and the dreaded textbook reading). I designated the last 30-40 minutes to reading and had a homework assignment that students could work on if they finished early until the end of class. The 3 groups included 1 that was teacher led where I would explicitly demonstrate reading strategies and with implemented discussion. The second group was student led with students that read aloud to one another. The special education teacher was assigned to the student led group. And finally a silent read group where students could complete their work independently. What I found from this strategy was that allowing students a choice of which group they wanted to participate in gave them a sense of independence and allowed them to feel in charge of their learning.

**Results:** What I found from this strategy was that once the students became comfortable with the routine and confident with their reading strategies (highlighting, context clues, reading the questions before the reading the piece, asking questions etc.) they were more likely to shift to the student led or even silent reading group. Because there is an adult assigned to each group making sure students are staying on task is not an issue. At the start of the 3 group reading structure I found that the majority of the students were with me and a few were in the silent reading groups. As time passed a small student led group emerged and once students understood that it was monitored more joined. Towards the end, I saw a significant transformation with one student. This student was the lowest student in terms of reading level/comprehension and writing however one of the smartest auditory learners. He was in a self-contained class up until this year so the social change was something that he had to become accustomed to as well. Toward the end of the school year he was working with the other students and comprehending the pieces. At the absolute last 3 group reading structure he ventured into the silent reading group where I saw him using his reading strategies, focusing and really trying to understand the passage independently. I was amazed by his efforts and believed that it was because it was his decision and on his terms that he eventually took the leap toward the independent reading group. I will continue to use this model however I think it is important to first incorporate numerous whole group instruction of reading strategies and deciphering the text.

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**Courtney Best Project SMART Reflection**

I taught for five and a half years before I was laid off due to budget cuts. Thankfully, I was only out of the classroom for one school year. When I walked in September, I was blindsided by our new requirements. When Dr. Schmitt said, “We are implementing Common Core shifts in ELA,” my response, was “Common what??” I couldn’t believe that in one school year, so much could change. I felt like a brand new teacher walking in my classroom this year, trying to navigate the new standards. Although I put my best effort in, I know I have so much more to learn. Thankfully, Dr. Kane invited me to join the Project SMART team, with a focus on the Common Core.

At the start of the year, I wanted to gauge what my students were reading, and if they were reading at all. Common Core standards want students reading on their own, and I almost already knew what I was walking into with my freshman crew. I was not surprised by their responses. I am not a math teacher, and there is a very specific reason for that, but I would wager about 65-70 percent of the students claimed to be non-readers. They gave reasons that are typical: “I don’t have time for that,” “It is boring,” and even some said “I don’t know how to read.” Now the last in that list was only a few, but it speaks volumes about what we are up against as educators. I did have some students claim that they liked reading sometimes, and very few who read on their own and for pleasure. What obstacles were in my way? Non-readers, those who are bored with reading, and those who have not been exposed to literature that they would like to read. What is a teacher to do?
Before I go into what I tried to do with this very typical crew of 9th graders, I want to share with you the outcome. I just had my students redo the survey. I did add a question, which leads me to the strategies I used (stay tuned). Now, I won’t say that I changed that 65-70 percent of students to absolute book worms. That is a lofty goal that I hope to achieve someday, but not today. I would say that 10-15 percent of those claimed nonreaders actually said that they have started to read due to this year. Would I like higher numbers? Of course. Absolutely. Who wouldn’t? Am I proud of those 10-15 percent of those nonreaders who now may be reading a bit more? BEYOND!

I don’t know if they would shout it from the rooftops, or tell their friends that they are reading, but the fact they actually read SOMETHING is huge to me. Common Core wants our kids to read so much more on their own, including complex texts that we usually read together in class. How can I expect students to read Romeo and Juliet on their own, when they won’t even read a young adult book that they may relate to (and the reading level is very easy)? My quest this year was the try to have my students become readers, and even with that small percent that has claimed to have read a book outside of class that would otherwise not read is huge to me. Will they read Julius Caesar on their own next year? I don’t know, but getting that habit is huge to me.

So how did I do it? It wasn’t magic. It wasn’t a something that came out of a book. It was just providing my students exposure to the books. Simple. Well, doesn’t a library do the same thing? Not quite. I did it in several ways, and each student had something a little different to say about the different exposures.

The first exposure was to actually having the books in my classroom. I had a small classroom library started from when I taught prior to this year. I also had books given to me by Dr. Kane. John Snow also was graciously given a whole bunch of young adult books, and I took a few here and there. This wasn’t the best type of exposure, per say, but it did help some students pick up a book they otherwise wouldn’t have in the first place. I also had books on an iPad I borrowed, and I believe having that technology available helped some students want to read.

My second type of exposure came from faculty book talks. Kristina Licatese came in, unannounced, and talked about her favorite books for a good 10-15 minutes. She is a lively teacher, who captivated a few that wouldn’t otherwise read. What? English teachers aren’t the only teachers who read? True story. I had invited all the ninth grade teachers to participate, but sadly she is the only one who took me up on the offer. Dr. Kane, as well, came in and gave several book talks. Students I didn’t peg as readers, who claimed they didn’t like poetry, gravitated towards the books in verse. Some students also read the Great Depression books that Dr. Kane presented on, as well.

My third type of exposure was through a requirement. I know, I know. It feels like I shouldn’t make reading a chore. However, I think I had some great outcomes. Many students who said they didn’t like reading enjoyed the presentations I required of students. They needed to read a book, create a project, AND present the book, discussing theme, plot, characterization, setting, and conflict. Many students on their surveys said they didn’t know how many cool books there were out there, until a classmate suggested it or presented it. This is huge!

Common Core is something I am still struggling with on a “how-to level” for many of the shifts, but my main focus this year was to develop a healthy habit of reading. I believe I accomplished this is many ways. I am excited to see what next year brings. I am going to be requesting more YA novels for my classroom, and we shall see if the reading continues!

Marc Copani Project Smart Reflection

This year in our Project Smart course we focused on incorporating the new common core standards into our curriculum. Personally, I was able to use some of the suggestions from staff and participants (Bomb, Unwind) to fuel discussions and spark interest in my classroom. Sharon Kane gave a great book talk about Bomb during
our lesson on the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and I was able to facilitate a discussion about modern world issues using material from the book Unwind.

As a personal project I decided to create an entire unit that used multiple non-fiction resources to facilitate a major project on the Renaissance. I worked with Marie Stroup, the school librarian and another participant in the course, to gather a collection of over one hundred books that dealt with the art, literature, and science of the Renaissance era. We then devoted thirty minutes of class time for three classes to each area by exploring this array of books in a free atmosphere where I allowed the students to discover these artists and inventors on their own. They then used this information to select one of each (artist, author, inventor/scientist) to research in the computer lab for a summative project that asked them to produce a first person journal entry, a sketch (either a preliminary sketch of a great work of art, scene from a famous play, or scientific concept) and a modern phone application that uses information from their historical figure in a modern way. They were not bound to pick for example, a sketch for the artist, journal entry for the author, and phone app for the scientist, but rather pick and choose who to use for which element based on their own interests. This project was a tremendous success and I received such terrific results I decided to make it a page in my portfolio. The link below will take you to that page.

https://sites.google.com/a/oswego.edu/mrcopani-s-portfolio/nysut-standard-iii

Overall, throughout the course I have gained a better knowledge of the common core standards, formed relationships with faculty and staff that will help facilitate future collaboration, and learned for myself how leisure reading can be a great tool in the classroom. I was also able to participate in Quest at SUNY Oswego for the first time, and was introduced to some great works of literature!

Kristina Licatese Project SMART Reflection

As I reflect on the school year that is quickly coming to an end, I am able to identify the following effects that Project SMART has had on my practices in the classroom.

When I began this course, I had planned to incorporate more target language “realia” (brochures, advertisements, authentic documents, etc.) into my lessons and assessments. I had anticipated introducing numerous photos and documents created for native Spanish speakers, in order to expose my students to more authentic material. Unfortunately, this plan took a proverbial “back seat” to the extensive review that needed to take place in order to prepare for final assessments.

However, upon reflection I have realized that Project SMART did instill a spark of literacy in a number of my lessons throughout the year. As this course is based heavily in reading, collaboration, and literacy in the classroom, I had not anticipated that it could spill into the teaching of a foreign language (I couldn’t imagine my students picking up a novel written in Spanish!) However, through collaboration with teachers from other disciplines and a sharing of numerous picture books, I identified a way to introduce literacy that would amplify the basics of learning a foreign language. For instance, after one inquiry group session I had been interested in a particular book that had been shared: Cozy Classic’s Moby Dick. This simple picture book – based on the classic novel – is told in 12 words and includes 12 corresponding pictures. I decided to present this book to my Spanish 2 classes, as well as my own Spanish version of Disney’s Aladdin told in 15 words. They had then been
given the task of retelling or creating their own story in Spanish, using 10-15 words (a minimum of 10 words had to be drafted from their chapter vocabulary list). Students not only became more familiar with their chapter vocabulary, but also learned new vocabulary as they pertained to their stories. Furthermore, they learned what constituted as the essentials to a story, as they were only permitted to include a maximum of 15 words.

I believe that the inquiry groups of Project SMART had a great impact on my development as a new educator. Through collaboration and discussion focused on literacy, I have been diving into a number of possibilities that I may never have considered incorporating into my classroom.