

Illinois Valley High School

First Trimester Board Report 2009

Submitted by Jo Ann Bethany

Every year is a new year in a high school and every day is a new one as well. Each day brings its own personality, issues, and joys. As I walk in the door each day, I fully understand that I am preparing to open a 'surprise present'. As with most surprise gifts, some are amazing, appreciated, and fill you with joy. Some are not exactly what you had expected but you accept and work with them. The one sure thing that I can always count on is that I am never, ever bored! As the new school year began it was great to see that the upper classmen (for the most part) had matured and were becoming much more focused on their academics. We have had less than a dozen referrals from the new freshmen class and though some are still struggling with figuring out the new-to-them equation that studying + completing work+ turning it in = grades = credit, overall it has been a great start with the 9th graders as well as the other students.

TECHNOLOGY

We are excited to be moving forward with the additions of new technology to our classrooms. We are currently in the process of getting projector mounts in each classroom. This is an extensive process that involves the ESD and an electrical company. Each teacher will have available a projector, a document camera, and a DVD player for daily instruction, for CREW lessons, and for school-wide PBS lessons. One of our goals this year is to create PowerPoint presentations and DVDs that can be used school wide for training, teaching, inspiration, and motivation. These will be generated by staff, students, and in a few cases purchased. We are also using Title One money to purchase two active boards and response systems for use by teachers. We are confident that the engagement level in the classroom will improve because it will be more interesting to students and will hold them more accountable.

21ST CENTURY LEARNING GRANT

Jennifer Marsden and Deborah Murphy-Mannix continue to facilitate the 21ST Century grant. We are in our fourth year and have one year to go. The funding drastically reduces after this year, so we will likely have to rethink some of what we are doing and how we can sustain parts of it. Currently we are offering afterschool classes in sign language, yoga, scrapbooking, archery, orchestra, martial arts, poetry writing, home-style cooking, mountain biking, and salsa dancing. These classes are largely taught by community members. We also have homework help and credit retrieval four nights a week using IV staff. This grant has provided amazing opportunities to our students.

ATHLETICS

Fall Sports are quickly coming to a close and winter sports' practices will begin next week. We had a difficult season as far as winning games went, but there was never a game that our kids did not hang in there and work hard until the end. We have struggled some with getting fans to the games. There is definitely something to be said for fans supporting winning teams. It will be interesting to see if moving to a new division will help make our students more competitive athletically. The work that John George and Mark Higgins have done to make this change a reality is much appreciated. It is not going to be an "easy" division any way you look at it, but most especially looking at the additional travel time and the costs of that – both monetary and time missed from classes.

ECMC SCHOLARS AND MENTORING

Another grant that we are so excited to have is the ECMC grant. We have 20 ECMC scholars in the 11th and 12th grades that are eligible to receive a \$6000 scholarship when they graduate. Alternates

are chosen in case a student moves, does not graduate, or does not go onto postsecondary education. This spring we will pick the final ten students from the class of 2012 to be the recipients of this award. It is a five year grant so the class of 2012 will be the last recipients. There has not yet been discussion about the chances of the grant extending or requalifying if it does. Each scholar and alternate has a mentor who meets with them on a monthly basis to discuss goals and planning for the future. This grant targets at-risk youth who have one or more factors that may interfere with them going on to college. Of the twenty students from the classes of 2008 and 2009 – eighteen are still in college, one completed a vocational program, and one ended up going into the military.

VIDEO-CONFERENCING CLASS

I am pleased that we are now doing a second year of video-conferencing AP Literature with Hidden Valley. With the cuts to our English department, there would have been no way that we could have offered it as a regular class. I am grateful to Hidden Valley for working it into their schedule and to Loralyn Townes for being willing to give it another try after the hurdles last year. It seems to be going much smoother this year. Some of that has to do with the personality of the class of kids, some has to do with Rob Saunders help in getting the system properly set up, and some has to do with the fact that things are usually easier the second time around. Learning to take a video-conference class is actually an important tool for college as most students will take at least one class in college using this technology.

DUCK DERBY and TONY THE TIGER

We feel truly blessed to be the recipients of \$15,000 from Frosted Flakes and \$24,000 from the Duck Derby. We are excited about the possibilities of being able to host a track meet next spring at the school. The generosity of time and money by the Rotary is truly a gift to our district and our school. There are hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of improvements to our athletic facilities that would not have happened without their tireless work.

LATE STARTS

The two two-hour late starts that we have had so far have been well-received by the staff. It has been wonderful to have that time to work together. The September one was largely spent working on our school improvement plan and doing a needs' assessment. During the October late start, all teachers had a chance to learn/review how to score writing samples and then practiced scoring some of our student's samples from last year's state testing. They were then able to compare how they scored the sample with how it was scored by state raters. Time was also spent with teaching some strategies for helping students to edit their work. Ms. Dickens-Turk presented the late start and did a fantastic job. Everyone left feeling that they had gained skills. All teachers will be asked to submit writing samples for at least two of their classes each trimester. The November late start will be on communication with diverse populations.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Change is often difficult and certainly the changes to our successful alternative program were challenging for us. Having two new lead staff members along with the new online program gave us a steep learning curve, but once the new computers were in place and folks had a chance to learn the new programs, it is working great. All credit makeup is happening after school. The other big change in alternative education is the GED program. All GED students are being referred to RCC and most do it at the Belt Building in Kerby. We are hopeful that our completion rate will remain solid.