

## Final Grant Report

Project Title: **High School Improvement Grant, YR 4**

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### ***Goals and Accomplishments 2007 - 2008***

#### ***Higher-order thinking skills through interdisciplinary learning, analysis, and synthesis of information.***

- a. Incorporate “Pre AP” skills such as SOAPSTONE and OPTIC in grades 9 and 10 classes, including strategies to analyze text for inferences, synthesis, and purpose in all classes including College Prep 1 and College Prep 2.

**To accomplish** – On March 14, 2008 Elise Frangos and Stacy Kitsis presented the Soapstone and Optic techniques to 65 teachers during whole school early release day. Curriculum directors and lead teachers gathered sample lessons from teachers during the remainder of the school year as evidence that the strategy was incorporated into instruction across the curriculum. **Final product** – Department leaders and principal gathered lesson plans, showing that the techniques have been utilized by teachers in their instruction. There will be more follow-up and review of the technique in SY 2008 – 2009 because the technique allows students who often respond only to very concrete or literal level questions a venue for thinking more freely and analytically.

- b. Create an interdisciplinary course study group of teachers and administrators to develop practical methods to create some interdisciplinary courses that broaden interdisciplinary thinking and analysis.

**To accomplish** –Cindy Bouvier led a study group of teachers from various curriculum areas to discuss the content of such a course and the materials and resources ( including human resources) necessary to implement such a course at AHS. **Final product** – a report from the study group documenting all benefits, obstacles, and needs to integrate such a course at AHS. This report will be presented to the SC in September.

#### ***Media literacy***

- c. Incorporate in 9<sup>th</sup> grade social studies explicit instruction in evaluating source material. And include one 9<sup>th</sup> grade social studies research paper that requires evaluating source material. Provide enhanced support for teachers and students via our library program on best practices for evaluating web sites and sources.

**To accomplish** – Kerry Dunne led a study group of social studies teachers to develop a resource guide that shows students specific examples of evaluating source material. **Final Product** – the guide and sample research papers from students showing that they have used appropriate source material. This report will be presented to the SC in September. The rubric developed will be used by social studies teachers in SY 2008 – 2009.

- d. Grade 9 English, social studies staff, and the librarian / media specialist jointly develop uniform rules, standards, and expectations for research papers, including acceptable sources citations. Share the guidelines for research papers between and among departments so all students are held to the same research writing expectations.

**To accomplish** – Melanie Konstandakis led a study group of English, social studies, and science teachers that produced a guide to writing research papers. **Final product** – a hard copy and electronic version of guide will be posted on the AHS website and evidence that teachers use the guide in assigning and correcting research papers will be collected in SY 2008 –2 009. The school will produce several classroom sets of the guide. Teachers who are working on research papers / projects will check the guides out and use them with students.

- e. Implement the academic honesty policy that defines rules and consequences re plagiarism and other issues of cheating.

**Final product** -- Department leaders and principal gather evidence to show that teachers are using and referring to this policy when assigning papers or establishing class rules. Teachers will complete a survey at the end of the school year demonstrating their knowledge and use of the academic honesty policy.

### ***Teamwork in a diverse, multicultural world***

- e. Train teachers to create teamwork rubrics that encourage active listening, peer evaluation, and equity and accountability for work done by each group member.

**To accomplish** – Charles Skidmore and Jill McCarthy and six AHS teachers demonstrated several techniques sample lessons and videos that show how this can be accomplished. **Final product** – Curriculum leaders and principal gathered evidence from teachers – sample lessons – of students engaged in these kinds of activities. This is available electronically and in hard copy and will be presented to the SC in September.

- f. Create study group of teachers and administrators to review options for world languages, with emphasis on increased spoken fluency and cultural understanding.

**To accomplish** – Ray Smith led a group of language and other interested teachers to look at oral fluency in target languages offered at AHS and the appropriateness of offering an Asian or Middle Eastern language at AHS and OMS. **Final Product** – a report produced by the study group that talks about level of target language oral fluency at AHS, strategies to improve oral fluency, and needs and obstacles for implementing an additional language into the MS / HS program of studies. The report will be presented to the SC in September.

### ***Stress and time management***

- g. Increase communication between and among teachers in each department so that homework loads are more even and coordinated.

**To accomplish** – curriculum leaders asked teachers within their own departments for a list of “big projects” and when they are assigned. Curriculum leaders put all information together and created a calendar that ensures that big projects are not all assigned at the same time. **Final Product** -- a calendar of “safe” times for each department to assign a major product or project, especially around

vacations and holidays. The calendar will be released over the summer or in September with “return to school” materials.

i. Provide increased mental health services via partnerships with non-profit, private practice, and third-party billing providers in the community. **To accomplish** – Cindy Bouvier worked with guidance counselors to sub contract to appropriate service and professionals. **Final Product** – a spread sheet documenting individuals and groups (not by name but by client hour) serviced by these providers. The addition of support services has made a tremendous difference to the lives of a significant number of students and to staff in terms of having real options for helping students cope with their challenges and get back on track academically.

### ***Communication skills***

j. Presentation software will be used as a common assessment in one grade level of social studies; other software and technology use will be piloted in other curriculum areas to increase student communication skills. Emphasis will be on clarity of communication, not just technical proficiency. Share the guidelines and expectations for technology-based presentations between and among departments so all students are held to the same technology/presentation expectations. Purchase or find equipment necessary to foster greater classroom use of PowerPoint and other computer-based presentations. **To accomplish** – Kerry Dunne led a study group to create the guidelines for effective technology presentations. In addition Jeff Snyder led a group of approximately 20 interested teachers to create the other technology based projects that would allow teachers to encourage blogging, webpages, sketch pads, and other subject-related technology projects. **Final Product** – a guideline for presentations on line and in hard copy. Sample presentations were collected and stored on-line by social studies teachers in designated grade. These guidelines will be presented to the SC; teachers will share their technology projects during early release time in SY 2008 – 2009.

### ***A love of learning coupled with a willingness to work hard***

k. Create a study group of teachers and administrators to investigate a grade 12 cap-stone project. Issues to discuss include integration with grade 12 major paper student-selected topics, and potentially requiring interviews and public presentations. The question whether this should be a graduation requirement and what role, if any, for independent study/self-directed learning will also be investigated. **To Accomplish:** Kathy Kaditz and Charlie Skidmore led a study group which builds on the internship discussion already begun this year to investigate the feasibility of an AHS cap-stone project. **Final Product** – a report that highlights the needs and obstacles to creating such a course and if the course is recommended a timeline for implementation. This study is on-going through the summer, but a final report will be presented to the SC in September..

### ***Math, Science, Technology, and Engineering expertise***

l. Investigate creating a multi-year science and engineering program consisting of a series of existing courses, extracurricular activities, partnership with local universities, participation in national math or science competitions, and close teacher-student support.

Investigate other methods to expose and introduce students to potential careers in math, science, and engineering.

**To Accomplish** – Nate Levenson and Charles Skidmore led a study group, including interested parties from the community to investigate what AHS has in place and what would need to be added to create an engineering pathway and to deepen math and science offerings at AHS. **Final Product** – a full report that details needs and obstacles to create the engineering pathway and additional or alternate math and science offerings to increase interest in and awareness of careers in math and science is being presented to SC on June 10, 2008. The report will be on line.

### *All areas*

m. Create year 2 implementation steps.

**To Accomplish** – Principal and administrative team monitor all reports from above to create an implementation plan for recommended activities. **Final Product** – A calendar / timeline showing which initiatives will be integrated into AHS offerings. The calendar will be developed over the summer in will be part of a presentation to the SC in June.

### **Community Service Coordinator –**

n. To continue work with Arlington town agencies and businesses to place students in community service opportunities and to help explore internship ideas as part of a more meaningful senior year experience. **To Accomplish** – The Community Service Coordinator has produced a list of summer and school year opportunities for students. The list is posted on line and in the Guidance Suite., All AHS seniors completed their community service graduation requirement for the 2007 – 2008 school year.

### **Critical Friends Group**

o. A continuation of our lab school work with the Harvard Divinity School provides us with a critical friends group that provides constructive criticism about all AHS work and projects. The presence of a university partner on school reminds all staff of the theoretical foundation of our pedagogical work, not just the practical and functional. The coordinator facilitated all aspects of the program and helped expand the program to the middle school.