

**Collaborative Curriculum Revision Project (CCRP)**

**Documentarian's Report**

**May 2016**

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## Introduction

The sixth series of Collaborative Curriculum Revision Project workshops, created by the DOE/CUNY Library Collaborative and managed by Graduate NYC, took place in spring 2016. It comprised a two-hour orientation and community building session and five two-hour professional development workshop sessions held in February and March at Graduate NYC headquarters. Faculty and librarians from Borough of Manhattan Community College (referred to as “BMCC” from hereafter) and the Brooklyn Secondary School for Collaborative Studies (referred to as “BCS” onward) gathered and developed a shared collection of teaching strategies for preparing students for the college experience and revised a high school history curricular unit as well as two college curricular units. Participants engaged in conversations on common teaching goals and challenges, skills that constitute “college-readiness,” and best teaching practices. In engaging in these conversations, participants developed a community of practice that is intended to extend beyond the workshop series itself.

This report describes the collaborative revisions to the high school curriculum and college curriculum units, explicates the process of revision and community-building, and details successes and recommendations.

## High School Curricular Unit

The high school unit presented for revision focused on an introductory lesson about “big” events in Earth’s evolution. Throughout the unit, the teacher asks students to define history and collaboratively create a list of the eight most important events in the Earth’s existence. The learning target is that students can define the eight most important events in the Earth’s history. The ultimate goal of the lesson is that students are able to understand exactly what history is and set the tone for the rest of semester. This lesson lays the foundation for them to achieve mastery in the subject area of 9<sup>th</sup> grade history and allows students to begin developing writing skills needed to pass BCS’s performance-based assessments. This lesson is part of a larger project that culminates in an essay about changes in the way history is presented.

Throughout the lesson the teacher:

- Shows students the learning target so they know what to expect to learn
- Works with learners on all levels
- Encourages student collaboration to present answers in class
- Facilitates a discussion that leads to students understanding of what history is and how it is written

Revision of the high school unit:

- After student groups share their lists of Big History events, the teacher should share his list to forge a connection and help students identify what they should understand from the exercise.

## College Curricular Units

The college curricular units presented for revision were presented by Professors Tracy L. Bealer and Marci Littlefield. Professor Bealer, an English professor, presented a lesson on understanding the connection between popular culture and intelligence by analyzing two texts. The lesson was designed to help students understand how to construct a well-written argumentative essay. Throughout this lesson a PowerPoint was used (see Appendix C) to describe the arguments made by the two authors and promote understanding of the two texts. Once students demonstrated understanding of the texts they were given an in-class writing assignment to explore comparing two texts and forming their own position about a topic.

Recommendations to revise this college lesson were:

- Include a section where students brainstorm what would be important in a comparison and why that would be important.

Professor Littlefield presented an ethnic studies lesson that helps students plan their class project on social resistance by marginalized populations. The facilitation of a discussion on what social justice and social resistance is led to an increased understanding of what was expected of students for the final project. The purpose of the lesson was for students to understand social resistance and brainstorm their chosen methods of social resistance for their projects. They were encouraged to choose their topics and outline their projects based on what was discussed.

Recommendations to revise this college lesson were:

- If student's chosen event has primary sources, encourage the use of primary sources
- Use a visual aid that more closely relates to the purpose of the assignment
- Check on student progress
- Provide more guidance as to what sources students should use

Discussion on these two curricular units allowed the BMCC and BCS faculty to come to an agreement that students show a lack of initiative. They also agreed that students can be too passive and need to develop more agency regarding their academic involvement instead of demonstrating a "question and answer" mentality. When asked whether or not this lack of agency is a result of the NY school system's Common Core focus, the faculty agreed that students' lack of agency was much larger than the state's focus on the Common Core.

### **Goals, Challenges, and Best Practices**

Discussion in the first workshop revolved around creating a community of practice and student needs. Both the BMCC and BCS faculty agreed that students need to learn how to think critically and also need to take ownership of their work. There was agreement between all faculty members that they want students to think critically. They want students to be aware of the world around them and to seek out differing perspectives. The faculty then agreed that they want students to use information to develop their knowledge of the world and apply their learning to broader themes outside of their classrooms. There was agreement between the participants that their individual goals as faculty may differ from their institution's respective goals. The faculty members at BCS did comment that recent administrative changes have allowed them to more closely lineup their personal educational goals with administrative

goals but also explained that while this progress is growing they can still observe challenges that arise when the goals differ.

The participants also discussed the challenges that they face in helping students meet learning objectives and goals. Common challenges included:

- Communication issues: Students are unable or unwilling to communicate their lack of understanding in class.
- Engagement: Students are not engaged in the learning process for a variety of reasons. This leads the teachers and professors to feel as though they put in more effort than their students do.
- Question and answer mentality: Students often cannot think critically enough to answer questions without answers directly in the text; they want the answers given to them.
- Discrepancy of expectations: Professors and teachers have expectations of students that do not match up to students' levels.

During the second workshop, the participants discussed other common challenges among their students and ways to disseminate learned information to their respective cohorts. A common challenge that was heavily explored was that of plagiarism in their students' work. Both the BMCC and BCS faculty agreed that students are not taught the proper skills for citation and therefore plagiarize their work. The BMCC librarian explained that professors at BMCC usually request library sessions about securing sources for class papers, but not plagiarism. Students have to develop their own understanding of the citation formats. In addition, the BCS faculty commented on the fact that their students are becoming accustomed to citations because they are required to complete a writing intensive project in each of their core classes. These papers serve as prep tools for the performance-based assessments that enable them to graduate. Admittedly, as an expeditionary learning school, this approach is relatively unique to BCS because their students do not take any NYS Regents exams besides the ELA Regents.

Another common challenge that the participants discussed at length was the lack of knowledge transfer (from semester to semester) and the lack understanding of students demonstrate at both the high school and college levels. The BMCC librarian shared the *Framework of Information Literacy for Higher Education* (the *Framework*) that has been adopted by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). This *Framework* connects core concepts regarding research and student learning to provide professors and librarians alike with resources to improve their instruction and engage students in the learning process. The *Framework* was shared with the participants in an effort to help them reach their own students and help students remember important concepts even after the concepts are no longer needed for the work at hand. The participants agreed that students learn concepts for the tasks at hand but forget the knowledge once it is no longer needed. There is little to no time for reflection, which limits the amount of knowledge that students keep with them from their classes.

During the fourth session, the participants presented student work and shared the different levels that they perceived their students to be at. The high school teacher provided a grading rubric that identified the scores of each student's written work. The rubric used is used at BCS and reflects their knowledge of what works best to assess student level. The faculty at BCS is attempting to expand the use of the rubric to the entire school and the wider community.

The participants also identified the use of visual elements and the splitting ("chunking") of tasks as two best practices that help students succeed on both the high school and college levels. Visual elements

were determined to help students put things in perspective and stimulate new perspectives in thinking. Breaking down complicated tasks allowed students to more fully comprehend the tasks expected of them.

### **Successes and Recommendations**

The participants produced suggestions that enable a better transition between high school and college:

- Visit to BMCC campus/library: Expose students to a college environment as well as the college library. Have students sit in a college class and allow them to interact with the students.
- Collaborative project: The history teacher and ethnic studies professor suggested co-leading a class and assigning a project between the two classes based on the same assignment. After assignment completion, classes would come back together to discuss assignment and any differences between the processes.
- The BMCC professors came to realize the importance of the library as a resource for students and aim to take advantage of the available resources in the future.
- Share the BCS rubric with other expeditionary learning schools to implement it throughout those schools and the larger educational community.
- Presentation: BCS faculty can develop a presentation for BMCC on the grading rubric used at BCS. BMCC faculty can add additional criteria to show expectations for students at the college level.
- Professional development workshop: At their institutions, introduce a workshop that allows professors and teachers to discuss revising assignment prompts and descriptions to foster better student understanding.
- For CUNY campuses connected to high schools, implement library services at the high school level so that students are prepared for college level reading and research.
- With the Library Information Literacy Advisory Committee (LILAC) develop an interactive workshop where faculty members discuss pedagogy and philosophy.
- The sociology professor realized that she can use BCS's rubric to organize her assignments.
- Promote reading "slowly" to allow students to read for understanding, rather than answers.
- Develop methods to reach the English Language Learners who are struggling.
- Promote the use of NoodleTools for correct citation.
- Implement library sessions for English 101 classes.
- Develop "community conversations" between faculty and students to discuss the college campus and larger educational system.

The participants identified common skills that students need to develop to succeed in college:

- Students need to develop the ability to think critically and independently.
- Students need to be comfortable in a "grey space" and recognize that there is not always a right or wrong answer.
- Students need to take initiative and learn self-determination, self-direction, and self-advocacy.
- College students need to recognize and use their available supports.
- Students need to read their syllabi and pay attention to due dates.
- Students need to use basic professional etiquette when communicating with faculty and staff.

- Students should understand that doing assignments requires breaking down tasks and processing them.

### **Conclusion**

The participants have taken a lot of information from these workshops and plan to implement some solutions accordingly. The HS faculty was able to use their grading rubric to allow the college faculty to understand how they prepare their students for college level reading and writing. Professor Littlefield plans to use the rubric as a stepping stone to improving her own assignments and grading criteria. Both college professors realized that the BMCC library offers a great amount of support for their students and feel encouraged to reach out for additional support outside the classroom. Because of their attendance in this workshop series, the professors and the BMCC librarian seemed to develop a greater understanding of each other's roles on campus.

Additionally, the discussion around common challenges for students at both the high school and college level allowed the participants to come to a consensus about which skills students need to succeed educationally. They were able to brainstorm future connections between BMCC and BCS, including visits to the college campus by which HS students would interact with older peers and experience a true college environment. Also discussed was the possibility of BMCC librarians presenting workshops on plagiarism for both English 101 students as well as the high school students. Several ideas for professional development workshops were pitched in an effort to foster a sense of community between college professors and high school teachers.

Overall, the participants have shared a fountain of information with one another, revised lesson plans to reflect best practices, and also shared ideas for future collaboration. Towards the end of the last session, they also reflected on their participation in this workshop series and identified improvements for the overall workshop series.

## **Appendix A: Participants**



## **Appendix A: Participants**

### **Workshop Participants**

Jean Amaral, Librarian, Borough of Manhattan Community College

Tracy L. Bealer, English Department, Borough of Manhattan Community College

Scott Henstrand, History Teacher, Brooklyn Secondary School for Collaborative Studies (BCS)

Marci Littlefield, Social Sciences/Sociology, Borough of Manhattan Community College

Susan Westover, Librarian, Brooklyn Secondary School for Collaborative Studies (BCS)

### **Workshop Observers**

Diane Dimartino, CUNY Office of Library Services

Melissa Herman, Project Manager, Graduate NYC!

### **Workshop Facilitator**

Andre Harper

### **Workshop Documentarian**

Kadacia Cooper

## **Appendix B: Session Agendas**

**AGENDA**  
**BMCC & BCS**

**CUNY-DOE Library Collaborative: High School to College Transition Project**

**Thursday, February 25, 2016, 4PM – 6PM**  
**Thinking Session (Session I)**

**Session goals:**

- To share and discuss our educational values (the habits of mind, learning objectives, and goals that we strive to meet)
  - To discuss the issues, realities, and challenges we face related to teaching and learning in high school and college.
  - To develop a shared understanding of best teaching practices in the specific disciplines (activities, exercises) that lead to success in the first year of college.
  - Presentation of Scott's High School curricular unit.
1. Welcome, introductions, and goals of the project
  2. Communities of Practice Quotation Exercise
  3. Educational Values and Learning Objectives
    - a. What are some of the goals/learning objectives you personally feel you need to achieve with your students?
    - b. Do your personal goals align with the goals mandated by your institution? If not, how are they different?
    - c. How do we know when the students have met the learning objectives/goals? (How do we know if we have been successful with our students?)
    - d. How are learning goals and objectives developed differently across the institutions?
    - e. Are there evident gaps or differences between the objectives for high school seniors and college freshmen? If so, what are the gaps/differences? Or are they aligned?
  4. Issues and Challenges
    - a. What are the primary challenges we face in the helping our students meet the learning objectives in our particular discipline?
  5. Scott's High School Curricular Unit presentation
  6. Conclusions and Next Steps
  7. Session Reflection and Looking Ahead

**CUNY-DOE Library Collaborative: High School to College Transition Project  
BMCC & BCS**

**Thursday, March 3, 2016**

**Session Goals:**

- Present and offer response to High School curricular unit.
- To discuss the challenges we face in helping students meet learning objectives.
- Presentation of college curricular units.

**1) Discuss Reflections from last session**

**2) Review Frustrations and Goals from last session**

**3) Feedback on Scott's curricular unit**

**4) Focus question: *What are the primary challenges we face in helping our students meet the learning objectives in our particular discipline?***

Follow up questions for discussion:

- What do your high school students need to meet these learning objectives? Are the expectations realistic for a first year college student?
- What challenges do your students face when grappling with complex texts in your discipline?
- What role does inquiry play in your discipline, and what are students' greatest challenges when engaging in inquiry? What are students' greatest challenges when engaging meaningfully with texts in your discipline?

**5) Presentation of Tracy's unit and creating a "parking lot" for reflections**

**6) Presentation of Marci's unit and creating a "parking lot" for reflections**

**7) Homework:**

- a) Reflections sheet
- b) What specific activities would you do in your classroom to help students successfully meet the learning objectives in the first year of college? Why would you choose these activities?
- c) Think about how to collaboratively develop a lesson for a high school senior and college freshman.

## **AGENDA (Session 3)**

### **CUNY-DOE Library Collaborative: High School to College Transition Project**

#### **BMCC & BCS**

**Thursday, March 10, 2016**

#### **Session Goals:**

1. Present and offer response to College curricular units.
2. To discuss suggestions, concerns, thoughts on how to merge the curriculum.
3. Discuss the role of inquiry in the classroom along with collaboration.

#### **Discuss Reflections -Group**

#### **Marci's Presentation of curricular unit**

#### **Feedback on Tracy and Marci's curricular units (Feedback Sheet)**

#### **Review Homework questions (from last week):**

- a) What specific activities would you do in your classroom to help students successfully meet the learning objectives in the first year of college? Why would you choose these activities?
- b) Think about how to collaboratively develop a lesson for high school/college freshman.

\*What role does inquiry play in your discipline, and what are students' greatest challenges when engaging in inquiry? What are students' greatest challenges when engaging meaningfully with texts in your discipline?

#### **Homework:**

- 1) Reflections sheet
- 2) Think of suggestions for creating a graphic organizer
- 3) Susan and Jean prepare a Librarian presentation

## **AGENDA**

### **CUNY-DOE Library Collaborative: High School to College Transition Project BMCC & BCS**

Thursday, March 17, 2016 (Session 4)

#### Session Goals:

- Begin to develop a revision to the high school & college units (i.e., graphic organizer)
- Jean's presentation
- Evaluate student work and incorporate rubrics to the curriculum (Susan & Scott)

1. Discuss Homework reflections
2. Jean's presentation
3. Feedback on curricular units' form
4. Evaluation of student work

#### Homework:

- Reflections Sheet
- Think in ways a graphic organizer can be developed to meet your classroom objective.

#### NOTES:

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**AGENDA**  
**BMCC & BCS**

**CUNY-DOE Library Collaborative: High School to College Transition Project**

**Thursday, March 24, 2016 (Session V)**

**Session Goals:**

4. Come up with a clear idea for a (realistic) integrated unit project.
  - a. Reflection on hypothetical project concepts.
  - b. Reflection on librarian's support role
5. Articulate next steps for making the project happen.

**1. Homework Reflections from last meeting and thoughts**

\*Think in ways a graphic organizer can be developed to meet your classroom objective?

**2. Consideration of project ideas**

- What is realistically feasible?
- What best embodies values/ideals?
- What support would be necessary?
- How can the Graphic Organizer and/or rubric be utilized?

**3. Thinking about the role of the library/librarian**

- What are the strategies for getting additional readings to students?
- What are the criteria for selection?
- If reading comprehension is a problem, what supports/alternatives could be developed?
- How do students improve their writing (i.e., synthesizing, research)?
- Utilizing Information Literacy 9-12 and the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education

**4. Developing a theoretical structure of a revised unit based on the shared student work and rubric (Scott, Tracy and Marci)**

**5. Consideration of next steps**

**6. Final reflections**

**Notes from Previous Session:**

- Susan and Jean discussed a student visit to BMCC library
- What about mentorship (Students at BMCC mentoring BCS)?
- Professional development at BMCC and BCS

## **Appendix C: Lesson Plans**






## Putting Two Texts Together

Stevens & Johnson

## + Same Argument: Different Focus

Daphne Bavelier: "Your Brain on Video Games"  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/daphne\\_bavelier\\_your\\_brain\\_on\\_video\\_games?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/daphne_bavelier_your_brain_on_video_games?language=en)



+ What is Steven Johnson's  
Main Idea?

"Watching TV Makes You Smarter"

+ First Paragraph



- How do we know Stevens is responding to Johnson?
- What points from his article does she summarize?
- Is this how I told you to do summary?
- How do her comparisons let you know her argument?

## + Second Paragraph

- What parts of Johnson's argument does she agree with?



## + Third Paragraph

- What does she criticize about Johnson?
- Do you feel these criticisms are valid?
- Any examples of your own?



## + What is Stevens's Main Idea

- Does Stevens think we should all stop watching TV?
- What is her position on the relationship between TV and intelligence?



## Putting Two Texts Together

Review of Structure to Prep for Paper 2

## + Introductory Paragraph

- Introduce the topic
- Introduce both texts
  - Authors' names
  - Titles of articles
  - Articles' main ideas
- Introduce your thesis/opinion/argument on the topic: What's your answer to the question?

## + Next Task

- Author's answer to the question + "because . . ."
- What does the first text say about the topic?
  - Evidence plus analysis
- Do you agree or disagree? Why?

## + Then . . .

- Author's answer to the question + "because . . ."
- What does the second text say about the topic?
  - Evidence plus analysis
- Do you agree or disagree? Why?

## + Finally

- Your answer to the question
- Evidence plus analysis for your position
  - Personal experience
  - Other texts you've encountered
    - Books
    - Essays
    - Videos

## + Bonus Paragraph: If there's time!

- Counterargument/Rebuttal

## + Conclusion

- Your position in relation to the two texts you've discussed
- Why is this question important?

## + What is the Counterclaim?

- The opposition's argument
- Claim: You should be a vegetarian
- Imagine: If you were in the opposition's shoes, what is the strongest reason you would give to support that claim?
- Counterclaim: You should not be a vegetarian

## + What is a rebuttal?

- Evidence used to contradict, counter, or refute the counterclaim.
- Yeah, this is true (it probably is), BUT . . . (add evidence)



## + Counterclaim/Rebuttal Par.

- Topic sentence (introduce counterclaim)
- Give rebuttal
- Give evidence
- Explain how the evidence weakens the other side's argument
- Closing sentence

## + Topic Sentence

- Introduce the counterclaim—try to think of the strongest reason!
- Sentences might start with:
  - Some may say . . .
  - While it is true that . . .
- Example: Those opposed to a vegetarian lifestyle will most likely point out that a diet without meat cannot provide a completely nutritious diet.

## + Rebuttal

- Explain why the claim is flawed. Make sure you have evidence!
- Example: However, studies have shown a vegetarian diet can provide complete nutrition and even give health benefits.

## + Evidence

- Give the evidence and explain how it weakens the counterclaim.
- Example: For example, my grandfather became a vegetarian after he had a heart attack, and now his doctor says his blood pressure and cholesterol are down. Not only does this show a vegetarian diet is healthy, it also shows that a person who doesn't eat meat might become even healthier.

## + Closing Sentence

- Remind your reader of your argument
- Example: While many believe a meatless diet is unhealthy, I've shown how a vegetarian diet is the way to go.

## + For Friday

- In-class rough draft of Paper 2
  - Bring copies of both texts (Stevens and Johnson)
  - Bring pen and paper, and your ideas about the relationship between pop culture and intelligence!

## + Practice counterargument

- Using the model we just discussed, write a paragraph that presents a counterargument and rebuttal to your position on paper 1



