

**Revere School Committee Meeting**  
**March 17, 2020**

A Regular Meeting of the Revere School Committee will be held on **Tuesday, March 17, 2020** at **6:00 p.m.** at the Ferrante School Committee Room, Revere High School.

**REGULAR MEETING:**

1. Pledge of Allegiance/Call to Order
2. Recognition
3. Superintendent's Report
  - a. Italy Field Trip
  - b. Nellie Mae Grant – Closing update
  - c. Update on Corona Virus
  - d. Student Opportunity Act Plan
  - e. Middle School Lottery
4. Student Representative Report
5. Public Speak
6. Consent Calendar (vote required)
7. Report of Sub-Committees
  - a. Safety and Security Sub-Committee
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. School Committee Interests
11. Motions
  - a. Encumber \$1,280 Invoice #0000060 to Hill International for additional fees for extended project timeline from December 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 regarding litigation.
  - b. Approve Payment of Invoice #0000060 in the amount of \$1,280 to Hill International for additional fees for extended project timeline from December 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 regarding litigation.
  - c. Encumber \$640 Invoice #0000061 to Hill International for additional fees for extended project timeline from December 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 regarding litigation.
  - d. Approve Payment of Invoice #0000061 in the amount of \$640 to Hill International for additional fees for extended project timeline from December 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 regarding litigation.

- e. Encumber \$1,045 Invoice #0000062 to Hill International for additional fees for extended project timeline from December 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 regarding litigation.
  - f. Approve Payment of Invoice #0000062 in the amount of \$1,045 to Hill International for additional fees for extended project timeline from December 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 regarding litigation.
  - g. Encumber \$3,185 Invoice #0000063R to Hill International for additional fees for extended project timeline from December 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 regarding litigation.
  - h. Approve Payment of Invoice #0000063R in the amount of \$3,185 to Hill International for additional fees for extended project timeline from December 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019 regarding litigation.
- 12. Executive Sessions
  - 13. Adjournment

**Note: The listed agenda items are those that are reasonably anticipated by the School Committee to be discussed at the meeting. Not all items, in fact, may be discussed, and other items not listed also may be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne K. Kelly, Ed.D  
Superintendent of Schools

DK/rp



3.11.2020

To Whom It May Concern,

I have had the privilege of working with the Revere Public Schools as a Program Officer since 2014, when the Nellie Mae Education Foundation awarded the district a grant to focus on blended learning practices in Revere High School. Since then, I have watched the district make excellent use of grant funding to implement a range of student-centered learning practices, achieving a high level of scale and sustainability at a rapid pace thanks to their innovative approach to complex change.

As we supported their work, a few key factors began to stand out as contributing to their success:

1. **Distributed leadership:** A range of committees at the high school have developed and grown under the leadership of Dr. Garcia and Dr. Perella, with full support from Superintendent Kelly and the district. By sharing decision-making and ownership of change efforts with professional learning groups, SCL committees, the School Redesign and Innovation Team, and other planning teams, changes at the high school originate with the full support of the teaching staff. By ensuring buy-in and shared understanding at the beginning of an effort, change has happened faster and with a higher chance of success. I observed this in their work on Making Student Thinking Visible (MSTV), where nearly the entire staff received training within a few years.
2. **Sustainable approach:** When a particular innovation proved successful, the team in Revere found ways to ensure that it could be implemented beyond the lifetime of the grant. With the MSTV effort, the extra step of training some teachers as coaches developed in-house experts who continue to support their peers, train new staff, and gather data to monitor implementation.
3. **Coherent efforts:** By focusing energy each year around “three big rocks,” the different change processes at the high school had specific anchor points to ensure that they were pointed in a coherent direction. Each person involved seemed aware of how their part of the work serves a larger goal. The district also made use of a logic model process and continuous improvement practices to establish a vision and make adjustments as context shifted.

These factors combined in Revere to produce a strong culture of collaboration and improvement. The cultural elements of complex change are perhaps the hardest to get right, and, because Revere has focused on them, they have successfully improved teaching practice in multiple ways that are measurably benefitting students. It also means that the high school and the district have established systems that are ready to succeed at future change efforts – they know how to identify problems, build shared support for solutions, learn from early implementation, and scale success so that all students can benefit.

Revere Public Schools has laid out a strong vision for their continued pursuit of student-centered learning, and I believe that their recent work shows that they have the right mix of people to make it happen. The momentum they have built behind their student-centered learning efforts has already begun to benefit the young people of Revere, and I hope that they will find continued support for their efforts.

Sincerely,  
Lucas Orwig  
Program Officer, Nellie Mae Education Foundation  
1250 Hancock St, Ste 701N, Quincy, MA 02169  
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# Nellie Mae Reflections

## 2014-2019

The initial work plan goals were established through the 18 month Urban Schools Grant of 2014-2015. During this time period, the school community assessed the current status of learning at the high school. Alternative strategies of teaching were examined through professional development and site visitations of innovative schools. Grant partners in this process were Great Schools Partnership and the Center for Secondary School Design.

The initial Revere grant team consisted of the grant administrator, principal, deputy principal, assistant principals, superintendents, and mayor. With the exception of the grant administrator, the principal (now a district administrator), and the current superintendent none of the team members from 2014-15 are currently employed by Revere Public Schools.

The student enrollment on 1/1/14 was 1551 and currently is 2172.

The initial grant reward was to run from 1/1/15 through 12/31/15. This was modified so that the grants would run on fiscal rather than calendar years. The grant was modified to start on 7/1/15 through 6/30/16. To adjust for this late adjustment we were offered a bridge grant of ½ the award for 1/1/15 through 6/30/15. The grant was then extended for the fiscal year 2015-2016.

Additional grants were awarded for 2016-17 and 2017-18. The Foundation offered a fourth year of funding to cover 2018-19. This extension was offered for either a 12 or 18 month term. We chose the longer term and planned for implementation through December 2019.

The first years were exploratory and organizational. School structure was analyzed and modified to align with SCL practices. Identified needs were supported by professional development in SCL teaching strategies, advisory teaching, student portfolio development, and cultural competency. Professional staff members were added to implement ELO, Parent/ Community relationships, and a Writing Center.

As our professional development progressed, we began to identify the most efficient methods to accomplish our SCL and equity goals. SCL would be supported by the online course MSTV and continued training and implementation of Competency Based Learning practices. Equity for students would be reinforced by Cultural Competency seminars for teachers and the application of Restorative Justice principles in the classroom.

This narrative is designed as an overview of our grant experiences through the personal reflections of teachers and administrators. The authors of these submissions have been a major factor in the success of the programs they describe and the positive changes made to Revere High School through the generosity and guidance of the Nellie Mae Foundation.

## Initial goals of the Nellie Mae Grant

1. Student Ownership of learning
  - a. Expand Learning Opportunities
  - b. Strengthen Advisory and Portfolio Programs
2. Competency Based Learning
  - a. Conduct Competency Based Learning Research
  - b. Build Faculty Understanding
  - c. Build Faculty Capacity
  - d. Develop CBL Framework
  - e. Refine Performance Assessments to Align with Graduation Standards and Performance
2. Teacher and School Leader Expertise
  - a. Enhance PLG's to Support Student Learning Outcomes
  - b. Develop a Teacher, Leading, Learning Academy
  - c. Expand Flipped Learning
3. Parent/Family and Community Engagement Support
  - a. Improve Communications
  - b. Develop Parent Leadership Institute
  - c. Offer Cultural Competency Training
4. Shared Governance
  - a. Establish Meaningful Student Leadership Opportunities
  - b. Increase Parent and Community Representation in Governance
  - c. Design Umbrella Committee Structure

### Committees Formed

The grant committee which was composed of the administrative team and teachers who had participated in the Urban Schools planning grant, began an assessment of the current school professional development support structure. This assessment was facilitated by The Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR) and professional development opportunities were established to improve identified deficiencies. The seminars were designed to address Leadership, Role Clarity, Community Engagement, and Program Evaluation. The Leadership seminar developed an understanding of strategies and methods to improve our leadership effectiveness and the Community Development sessions evolved into a SCL Community committee and the eventual establishment of the Parent Leadership Training Institute. Role Clarity and Program Evaluations produced working documents that were adopted by the district.

## CSSR Committees

### The Center for Secondary School Redesign

1. Role Clarity
  - a. Designed a customized position template and development process
  - b. Created a position development and hiring guide
  - c. Developed detailed position descriptions
  - d. Conducted Success Factor Interviewing (SFI) training
2. Program Evaluation
  - a. Explored research and developed a program evaluation and protocol
  - b. Created full rubrics for program evaluation process elements
  - c. Created a process map for the evaluation process
  - d. Created a guide for the implementation of the process
  - e. Created forms for supporting steps in the process
  - f. Clarified roles in the process
3. Community Engagement
  - a. Identified stakeholders who would be impacted by the team
  - b. Identified potential services the team could supply
  - c. Identified and audited nine other teams or positions that were involved in community engagement
  - d. Identified a clear purpose as part of their charter
  - e. Provided Family/Parent Leadership Coordinator with coaching
4. Leadership
  - a. Shared Information and tools on theory and best practices
  - b. Developed a Charter focusing on communication
  - c. Started an initiative to support new leaders
  - d. Discussed dealing with resistance to change

Work within these committees resulted in the identification of the existing committees and resources at Revere High School. The administrative team aligned these resources to the goals stated in the grant work plan. Committees were reorganized and renamed to reflect the major goals of the grant.

## School Redesign and Leadership Team

A School Redesign and Innovation Team (SRIT) was designated as a coordinating entity to oversee the newly designated committees and to act as a liaison with the district.

*The following is a reflection on the SRIT by Dr. Lourenco Garcia. Dr. Garcia was the principal at Revere High School and supervised the grant through August of 2018 when he was promoted to the district position of Executive Director of Data and Accountability.*

The School Redesign and Innovation Team (SRIT) was created in response to the district's educational philosophy that teacher collaboration leads to trust and accountability. This belief is aligned with evidence based research and practice that suggest that if teachers work in a team, they can delegate tasks according to expertise of each team member, learn with and from each other through peer observations, brainstorming ideas, and sharing curriculum and classroom experiences that will contribute to school improvement and student achievement. With the district embracing Student-Centered Learning (SCL) as a pathway to promote deeper learning, high expectations and equitable instruction and outcomes for all students, SRIT was conceived as a think tank committee comprised of practitioners, including teachers, students, curriculum directors, and the principal to research best practices, guide and sustain system change based on the four tenets of SCL and Revere Educators Leadership Board model.

1. Based on the district's vision of SCL, SRIT was entrusted with the responsibility of advancing and implementing SCL opportunities and initiatives including:
  - a. College and career planning and support
  - b. Early college courses and dual enrollment
  - c. Expanded learning outside of the school setting through business and community partnerships
  - d. Common criteria for demonstrating competency across diverse learning experiences/assessments and competency based classroom activities
  - e. Expanded flipped learning
  - f. Administrator and teacher participation in the district Teaching, Leading and Learning Academy
  - g. Student leadership training, mentorships and Student Senate

2. Advancing SCL across the district through collaborative planning, shared initiatives, and alignment of programs and practices including:
  - a. Community Advisory Councils
  - b. Parent Leadership Institutes
  - c. Professional development, criteria and measurements of cultural competency
  - d. Student leadership programs
  - e. Expanded learning opportunities with external partners
  - f. Enhanced PLGs to support SCL
  - g. Refined policies that support competency based learning
  
3. Ensuring effective communication of improvement plans, proposals and projects with all schools and constituencies through:
  - a. A SRIT Communication Plan that is aligned with the RELB Communication Plan to engage the School Committee, parents, students, faculty, administrators, and community members while fostering understanding and involvement in SCL
  - b. Formal opportunities and means for information sharing and discussion of system change that puts students at the center of their learning
  
4. Working closely with RELB with:
  - a. Recommendations for changes to district/school policies and practices to facilitate implementation of SCL, CBL teams, and summer institutes
  - b. Proposals for SCL experiences, strategies, programs and practices consistent with the district change process
  - c. Providing the RELB with updates and status reports of SCL initiatives and evidence of their impact on student learning
  - d. Collaboration with Leadership Councils to optimize and integrate district improvement plans and projects

Reflecting on the programs and initiatives undertaken by SRIT, at high school and district levels, I can attest with confidence that SRIT has played a critical role in bridging the divide between teachers and administrators in times of increased pressures for efficiency and accountability. The structure has spearheaded the work that led to the development of a positive school culture where teachers, administrators, and students feel valued, cared for, respected, and engaged in working together towards solving complex problems of practice to advance SCL. As the SRIT governance structure evolved over time and became more complex, a set of agreed upon team norms were developed to facilitate important conversations about teacher collaboration, systemic changes, school culture and climate, curriculum, instruction and assessment, access and equitable practices, school policies and practices, student agency and personalized learning, and numerous other critical issues affecting student learning. STRIT created a space of open dialogue where teachers and administrator provide feedback on each's other work, think and act on projects and initiatives requiring creative ideas and solutions without fear of reprisals or censorship.

Through its four SCL research-based guiding principles and 12 SCL committees (refer to chart below), SRIT was tasked with the responsibility of researching and addressing specific problems of practice and



in so doing it created and promoted a school-wide movement to unite and coalesce educators around a common purpose: to achieve educational excellence for all students through personalization, equity, and high expectation in order to provide them with ownership, agency, and choice. Through established meeting protocols, participants engage in inquiry-based learning activities to determine the root causes of individual, structural, and systemic barriers that have either acted against or precluded our students from achieving their full potential. As a result of high leverage practices, programs, and initiatives, the school was able to design, test, and implement creative SCL programs, including Flipped Learning, Competency-Based Learning, Community Parent Engagement, Text-Based Writing, Writing Center, External Learning Opportunity, Making Student Thinking Visible, Restorative Justice and many others have shown promising results towards increasing access and equity for students.

A significant number of teachers have developed expertise around CBL practices and established shared learning expectations in content area groups. Teacher-led professional learning on performance-based assessments measuring both cross-cutting and content-specific competencies and formative assessment practices to support all students (regardless of their cognitive skills) and equitable grading approaches and practices are fresh concepts championed by SRIT. The ongoing training on grading and performance-based assessment practices have shaken the belief systems of numerous educators across the district forcing us to reexamine our existing policies, practices, and expectations about what students know and can do with a focus on skill development and mastery.

Other SRIT driven initiatives have caused a positive impact on practitioners' perception of our culturally and linguistically diverse students. They also affected the overall cultural fabric of our school and district towards access, inclusion and equity, cultural responsive teaching/cultural competency, social emotional learning, and restorative justice. Workshops on these topics have become a centerpiece of practitioner training and preparation programs considering our culturally diverse students. As a result of these trainings and preparation programs, teachers, administrators, and staff have a better understanding of our diverse students – their perspectives, perceptions of, approaches towards diversity have also changed leading to better academically, socially, emotionally, and politically prepared students. Revere parents have also benefited from SRIT leadership through the Parent Training Leadership Institute (PLTI). Framed within our vision of promoting parent engagement, a series of 20-week workshops aimed at training parents in advocacy, civic capacity, and leadership to support their children's schools, communities, and government were implemented. Three cohorts of 20 diverse parents were trained. PLTI graduates have been actively engaged in helping newly arrived immigrants integrate into the community and navigate the school system.

A wide range of other SCL programs, pathways, and external learning opportunities to promote SCL were equally spearhead and supported by SRIT. These include Internship and Dual Enrollment opportunities, Youth Leadership Training, Student Senate, Student Portfolios and Capstone Projects, and Student/Community Showcases. These programs and initiatives have significantly contributed to enhancing students' skills development through collaboration, communication, leadership, and creative-problem solving.

To determine the types of knowledge, skills, and values we want our students to have for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we partnered with Brandeis University to develop the System and Student Logic Models (SSLM) for all schools. The SSLM, as a framework that represents the relationships, assumptions, and rationale for why certain practices, programs, and initiatives fall short of their desirable outcomes in a given organization, provided us with a good understanding of where we were as a school district in our trajectory of student learning and success. In our case, we focused our efforts on reexamining our

existing policies, practices, and beliefs that may have worked as obstacles to student success and develop results-driven priorities, goals, and objectives to support our SCL vision. The process focused on assessing educators' expectations of and attitudes towards our culturally diverse students, district's policies and practices, systems of assessments, curriculum and classroom instructional practices and formulate action steps and strategies to inform goals and envisioned learning outcomes for high school students.

To vertically align our school system, we also expanded the LM process development to middle and elementary schools. Through cabinet meetings, the superintendent has engaged all K-12 schools in discussions involving SCL to ensure the district's mission, vision, and core values are consistent and articulated across the board. To that end, this past year, through Brandeis University, school leaders, including principals and directors have participated in SSLM discussions and how the framework could be used to assess and monitor implementation fidelity, adaptations, and practice. As a result of this work, all schools in the district have developed their own logic models, delineating the skills and knowledge students should have, as they transition to high school and post-secondary education with a focus on college, career, and civic participation.

To ensure program implementation fidelity, evidence based practice, and long-term sustainability during and after the DCSL grant, in addition to the Nellie Mae educational Foundation (NMEF), SRIT and its Continuous Improvement team has worked with a number of well-known education consultants, including EDC, Great School Partnerships (GSP), and Research for Better Teaching (RBT), Center for Secondary School Redesign (CSSR), Brandeis University, and Engaging Schools on professional development, program evaluation, data collection, analysis and sharing for informed decision-making. Through inquiry-based learning involving teachers, students, and administrators, driver diagram and PDSA cycles to optimize and improve program implementation, system and student logic models, program mapping initiative, teacher and student questionnaires on curriculum, instruction, assessment, access and equity audit, course taken patterns, academic mindset and tenacity, technology, ELLs, restorative justice social and emotional learning practices, teacher leadership (e.g., PLGs, C2C teachers), Making Student Thinking Visible, grading practices, cultural competency and numerous other initiatives, we have deepened our understanding of our system's strengths and areas of growth, leading to well-informed plans, action steps, and strategies for continuous improvement. In summary, the success we have achieved is significant in the sense that the student-centered learning philosophy pursued and supported by SRIT has provided our school and district a renewed purpose in our vision of restructuring, creating and aligning structures, processes, and systems to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students, increasing student voice and ownership of learning, ensuring student experiences are linked to student interests, and enhancing anytime, anywhere learning through digital technology. SRIT "forced" us to reexamine our longstanding educational assumptions, practices, policies, and beliefs about teaching and learning by forcing us to shift away from one size-fits-all in favor of more equitable practices that incorporate the views and experiences of our students into instructional decision-making. Through a well-established culture of continuous improvement, we have made significant progress in the areas of teacher leadership capacity, learner-centered pedagogy, student leadership, achievement and engagement. Most importantly, we have a culture of growth mindset and continuous improvement modeled and led by teachers. School leaders have also embarked on model standards for creating and sustaining viable teacher leadership.

Every RHS educator will be a member of one of the teams or committees dedicated to continuing the work we are doing to improve student-centered learning at RHS. Representatives from the elementary and middle schools will also be included on the teams and committees. These small groups will have

clear charges for a specific area of professional learning or structural improvement in the school. They will meet together monthly during cross curricular PLG time. During principal's meetings, the teams/committees will meet with the other groups in their designated tenet of student-centered learning. For example, members from Personal Learning Plan Committee, School Improvement Team, and Student Senate will meet together under the tenet of "Student-Owned Learning." Two members of each tenet group and two at-large members will make up the SRIT to ensure sound communication and decision making between the various groups working to improve student learning and achievement.

**Revere Educators Leadership Board (RELB)**

**School Redesign and Innovation Team (SRI Team)**

Competency-Based Learning	Anytime, Anywhere Learning	Personalized Learning	Student-Owned Learning
CBL Planning Team	Flipped Learning Coaches	Advisory Committee	PLP Committee
Professional Learning Groups	Digital Technology Team	Cultural Competency Team	School Improvement Council
Literacy Team	ELO Team	At-Risk Team	Student Senate
Portfolio Committee		Community Engagement Team	

The SRI Team comprises teachers, students, family/community members, directors, assistant principals, deputy principal, and principal and representatives from elementary and middle schools. While the team is flexible, it meets at least once a month and has appointed liaisons to coordinate work with RELB. The SRI Team will work closely with the RELB by a) proposing Student-Centered Learning (SCL) policies, experiences, programs, and practices consistent with the district change process, b) piloting programs and sharing program reviews with the RELB to help shape district or school policy practices regarding SCL, c) providing the RELB with updates and status reports of SCL initiatives and evidence of their impact on student learning, and d) collaborating with RELB Leadership Councils to integrate student learning practices into district improvement plans and projects.

## Initiatives

Several initiatives of the grant have evolved into sustained components of RHS. The work involved in researching, learning, and teaching staff to assure implementing was performed by the members of the SCL committees.

### 1. Student Portfolio

Professional development for the SCL Portfolio committee on the use of the software Richer Picture was given by Ideas Consulting. This committee was then tasked with instructing the faculty on the use of the software. The faculty then introduced Richer Picture to their Advisory students. Students uploaded work samples for their portfolio submissions during Advisory periods. Long term sustainability of this program was envisioned by the core of trained teachers on the committee acting as peer trainers and the development of an in-house portfolio server to replace the Richer Picture software program. This district developed program has eliminated the need for a yearly subscription fee.

### 2. Advisory

The professional development firm of Educators for Social Responsibility was identified as a resource to train the SCL Advisory committee in the methodology of Advisory classes. Again, the model of a small representative group of teachers was trained to be in-house trainers for Advisory development. Advisory classes were incorporated into the schedule and meet three times a week for a 24 minute period between first and second block.

### 3. Parent/Family Leadership.

The National Parent Leadership Institute was identified as a resource to improve community involvement in schools. Several parents were trained as facilitators by the institute. The institute also supplied a curriculum of instruction that was modified to address the needs of Revere. Using the training and the curriculum, a Parent Leadership Training Institute was developed. The 20 week training was attended by 15 to 20 parents each yearly session. Lessons in civics, school structure and culture were presented. Local politicians and business people were invited as guest speakers. To assist the parents in being able to attend these evening classes childcare, snacks, and a light evening meal were provided. Each class participated in a graduation ceremony at city hall.

A Student Showcase was developed. Initially this was a high school based showcase for parents and community. It has now expanded to a district wide event showcasing the work and projects of several hundred students. Design Learning Opportunities was contacted to assist in supporting teachers and students in the skills necessary to organize and run a community showcase. The showcase in the spring of 2019 was produced solely by Revere staff and students.

### 4. One Goal

This program has been adopted by the district based on the experience supported by the grant. A class of third year students was identified through guidance as potential college applicants requiring additional encouragement and assistance to complete the process. This group of students was assigned to

a math class taught by a One Goal trained and supported teacher, Katie Sinnott. In addition to the academics taught, time was spent on explaining the college process. These same students would be assigned to Ms. Sinnott as seniors and she would also provide support to them through the first year of college. The success of the program led to the training of a second teacher, Erin Cronin to initiate a second three year cohort.

*The following reflections have been submitted by staff members who have worked during the grant on the development of these programs. Their commitment to these initiatives has been instrumental in the adoption of these principles by the staff.*

## RHS Writing Center

*The Writing Center has been developed and taught by Ms. Allison Casper who has submitted this report. The Center was an early initiative and has evolved to be an integral component of Revere High School. The district modified an area of the Learning Commons into a large classroom with diverse work areas and computer work stations. The non-traditional design of the room has created a flexible teaching environment that has proven efficient and productive for small group work or full class instruction.*

*All students are writers and all writers need readers*

### **Mission Statement**

The RHS Writing Center's mission is to support students of all ability levels and cultural backgrounds in using the writing process to clarify their thinking, to communicate, and to create. Whether a student requires support in composing an assigned written response to a content-specific text or simply seeks the feedback of a supportive reader, we will offer support for students in every discipline.

### **New Beginnings**

Since its launch during the 2015 - 2016 school year, the work of the RHS Writing Center has been guided by the following questions:

- How can a high school writing center impact teachers, peer writing coaches, and students who utilize it?
- How can a high school writing develop students' writing skills, improve their productivity, and increase student confidence?
- How can a high school writing center create a culture of writing at a secondary school?

### The Idea of a High School Writing Center

The demands of the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework developed from the Common Core standards are rigorous. Students need to be prepared for the writing they will compose in college and in their careers. In *Writing Instruction that Works*, Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer highlight that research in writing instruction reveals that teachers need to provide students with authentic tasks and “responsive audiences.” Furthermore, in their *National Study of Writing Instruction*, Applebee and Langer found that only 44% of English Language Arts teachers reported organizing a workshop environment for student writing, meanwhile only 13% of teachers in other academic disciplines reported utilizing a workshop environment. These percentages are low. A workshop environment provides writers with vital conversations about their writing. How can a single teacher in a class of twenty-five students provide one-to-one conversation before, during, and after the writing process? A writing center is the answer. A writing center fosters the discourse about writing that begins in teachers’ classrooms and is reinforced in the writing center as peer tutors and students collaborate. From the conversation between tutors and students, the conversation within students, which writing center pioneer Kenneth Bruffee calls, reflective thinking, can be cultivated. Both Bruffee and Stanford professor of English, Andrea Lunsford, argue that learning is collaborative and the writing center is a place of equity where all participants - teachers, students and tutors - have something to learn.

### College vs. High School Peer Tutors

In the spring of 2015, during the planning phase for the RHS Writing Center, the literacy coach, Mary Ellen Dakin and I brainstormed plans for a high school writing center. At the time, we believed that students from a local university would be the most effective writing tutors. I contacted a professor I knew from UMASS Boston and he connected me with Dr. Patmon, Professor of Education, also at UMASS Boston. Dr. Patmon was overseeing high school writing centers in three Boston Public Schools. She recruited, hired, and trained undergraduates to tutor students in a designated separate space or teachers’ classrooms in those three BPS schools. Dr. Patmon’s program was funded by the Calderwood Foundation. Dr. Patmon invited RHS to collaborate with her program, but we had to use our own funding from Nellie Mae to pay the college tutors. Hourly paid tutors made the college-high school model of peer tutoring financially unsustainable long-term.



We continued with the plan to have college tutors support RHS students beginning in the first semester of 2015, but simultaneously, I began to develop a plan for implementing a peer tutoring program. When the school year began, 1 to 2 college tutors were available every day to support RHS students. Not only was this model financially unsustainable, but also college students were not as effective as peer tutors for the following reasons.

- College students were unreliable. If one called in sick or was late, RHS students and teachers lost the opportunity to receive support.
- 1 to 2 college students were not enough to have an impact on students and teachers at RHS.
- College students were not familiar with school culture or teacher expectations.
- College students were not able to adapt quickly and support students in a variety of academic disciplines (i.e. tutoring in ELA followed by biology).

For these reasons and the funding, college tutors from UMASS Boston were phased out by spring of 2017. From my observations over the past four years and teacher feedback, I believe peer tutors, who we call “writing coaches” are the best choice for a high school writing center. Peer tutors are familiar with school culture, have relationships with teachers and know their expectations, understand typical writing assignments across academic disciplines, and use the language teachers use when discussing student writing. Furthermore, peer tutors can capitalize on existing teacher or student relationships to better support RHS students. To summarize, peer tutoring works for the following reasons:

- Peer tutor’s non-evaluative role
- Unique peer tutor-student relationship
- Authentic audiences
- One-to-one instruction
- Familiarity with school culture, including teachers and assignments

### **The Necessary Components of a Peer Tutoring Program**

A high school writing center needs three components for success - a space, a person to coordinate the program, train the tutors and collaborate with teachers, and a peer tutoring staff.

#### A Writing Center Space

The first necessary component is a writing center space, no matter the size. A space within a school library serves as a central location for students to gather. Any place where students and peer tutors can sit together and talk about writing will suffice. With funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation grant and the emphasis on student-centered learning, a separate space in the Learning Commons for the RHS Writing Center was feasible. Upon entering the writing center space, students and staff feel at ease as the multifunctional furniture provides an environment that encourages conversation and collaboration.



### A Writing Center Coordinator

The second necessary component of a peer tutoring program is a teacher who will train, supervise and support the tutors, collaborate with teachers to best integrate tutors into the culture of writing that teachers have established, and build a team environment for peer tutors that will ensure success. Since I was an English teacher at RHS, the transition into the new role of writing center coordinator was smooth. I was able to garner support and feedback from my colleagues while developing and maintaining the peer tutoring program. In my role, I recruit new peer tutors via teacher recommendation and peer tutors enroll in a semester-length elective course with me (see below for details).

Some teachers prefer peer tutors to collaborate with students in their classrooms while others prefer to bring whole classes to the writing center. This flexibility is the send-in (classes or individual students report the writing center) or send-out (peer tutors report to teachers' classrooms) tutoring model. For the new program to grow and more teachers to try it out, the flexibility was important. I am forever indebted to the first cohort of six or seven teachers who were willing to invite peer tutors into their classrooms or book time in the writing center with the tutors. The collaboration between the writing center coordinator and teachers guided the program and encouraged its growth.

Without teacher buy-in, teacher voice, teacher-writing center coordinator collaboration, and peer tutor-teacher collaboration, a peer tutoring program might have some insurmountable challenges. Most teachers invite tutor collaboration and feedback on student writing and teacher assignments, especially in the student-centered environment that staff is cultivating at RHS.

### Building and Maintaining a Peer Tutoring Course

#### *Writing Center Fellowship (one semester)*

##### Course Description:

This course is designed for seniors and juniors interested in taking on a leadership role and developing their speaking, listening and writing skills. In the initial weeks of the course, students reflect on and study the writing process, engage in readings about the theory and practice of effective tutoring, and conduct mock tutoring sessions. Additionally, students will write in multiple drafts and engage in the writer's workshop model to hone their writing and speaking skills. After this initial training period, student tutors will tutor one-on-one or tutor small groups of students at any stage in the writing process in the writing center or at the request of teachers in their classrooms.

*Writing Center Fellowship: Advanced Tutoring (one semester)*

Course Description:

This course will expand on students' knowledge of and experience with collaborative, student-centered peer tutoring. In the initial weeks of the course, students, who are experienced peer writing coaches, engage in readings and discussion about writing center theory and practice, contribute to the planning and implementation of new writing center initiatives, and mentor new writing coaches during the training process.

As the coordinator, I recruit students based on teacher recommendation. As established earlier, equity in the writing center is critical to its success; therefore, peer writing tutors who will respect students of all academic levels and be capable of playing multiple roles for the students they guide is required. A course with lofty goals needs a prestigious title. I settled on "Writing Center Fellowship." Such a title, I hoped, would exhibit the leadership roles that peer tutors would play and facilitate the message that peer tutors would be readers and writing coaches for students of all ability levels. It's important to tap all potential - students from AP, honors and college prep classes. Some highly effective tutors can be discovered in non-honors writing based courses. Peer tutors at RHS write weekly reflections, which I read and provide feedback. Additionally, peer coaches read and discuss readings on writing center theory and practice, write a variety of assessments about their experiences, and practice mock writing conferences before they begin supporting students.

For the original iteration of the course, I decided that five tutors per block would be sufficient for the debut of the program in the spring semester of 2016. This decision was not based on research; it was based on instinct. For a novel program, I believed a team-like atmosphere where the tutors could form bonds with each other would best serve the goals of the new RHS Writing Center. I believed that the peer tutors would be most effective if they could collaborate and rely on each other when working with challenging students or when a difficult tutoring scenario had arisen and a second opinion was needed. Since then, the writing center and support offered has been in relatively high demand. This school year (19 - 20), all four blocks have between 7 to 9 peer writing coaches. Ten students is probably the maximum number of students to maintain a successful program with both one-to-one peer coaching and online feedback, which we launched in 2017 and has slowly become a popular means of getting feedback for students who may not have the time to access the writing center.

**Results**

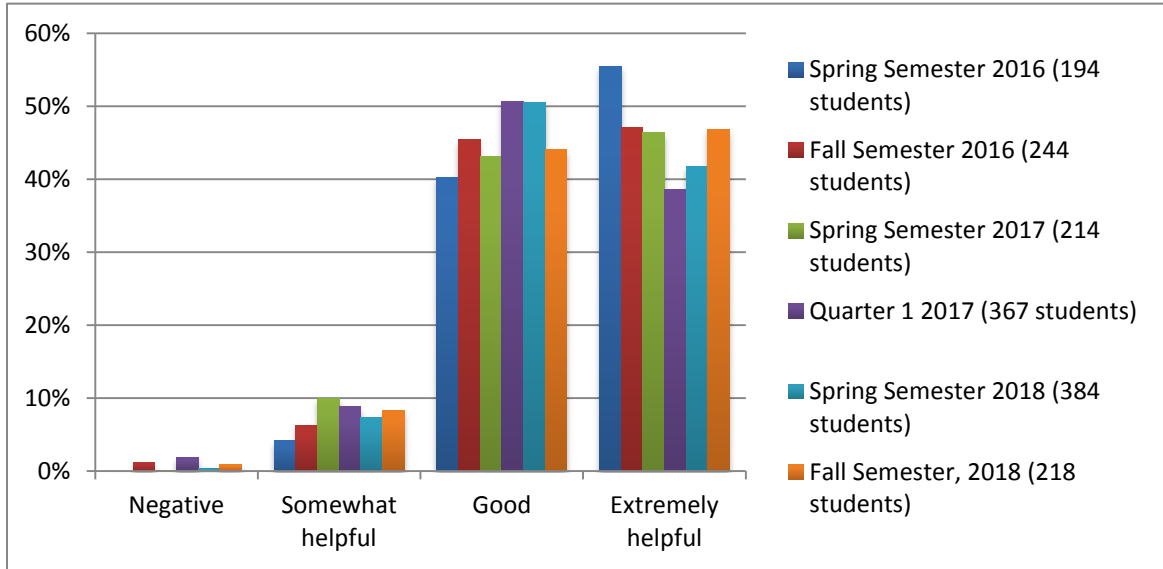
<b>Requests by Subject (2018 - 2019)</b>	
ELA	62%
History	27%
Math	2%
Science	9%

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Number of Classes Supported</b>
<b>2016 - 2017</b>	575
<b>2017 - 2018</b>	555
<b>2018 - 2019</b>	628
<b>2019 - 2020</b>	214 (as of 10/16)

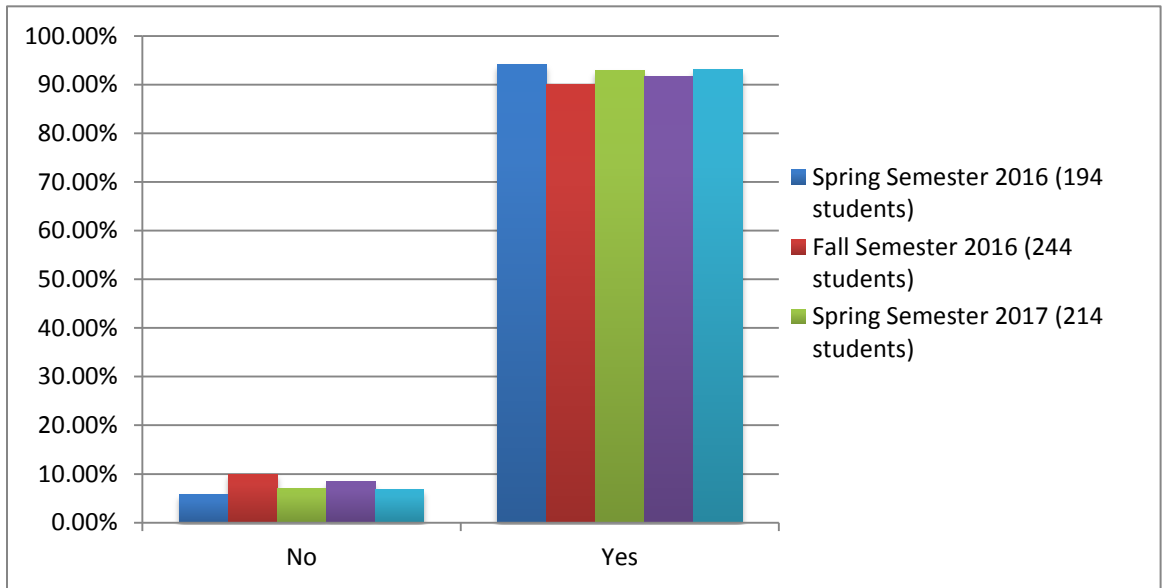
<b>“Shared” Student Writing for Online Feedback (2018 - 2019) at <a href="mailto:RHSwritingcenter@rpsk12.org">RHSwritingcenter@rpsk12.org</a></b>	525
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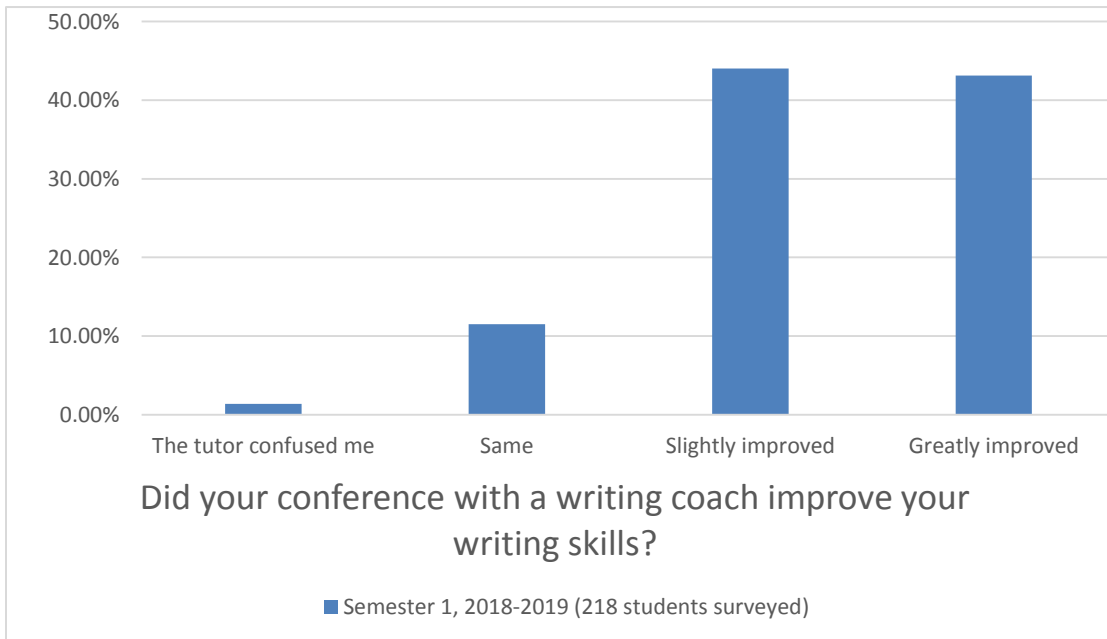
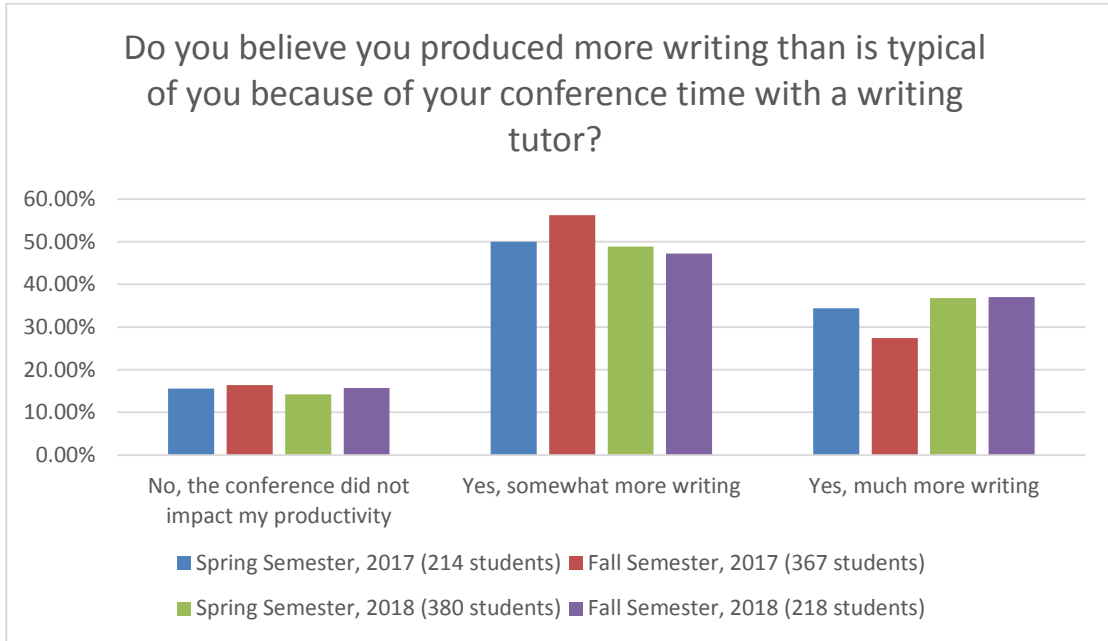
**Data from Anonymous Student Surveys**

**From your perspective, rate your overall experience while working with a tutor:**



**Would you recommend working with a tutor to a friend?**



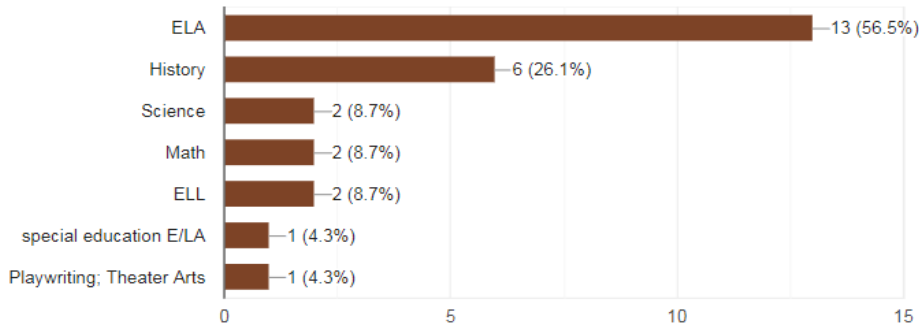


Anonymous Teacher Survey

Teachers who used the writing center more than once a semester were surveyed in the spring of 2019

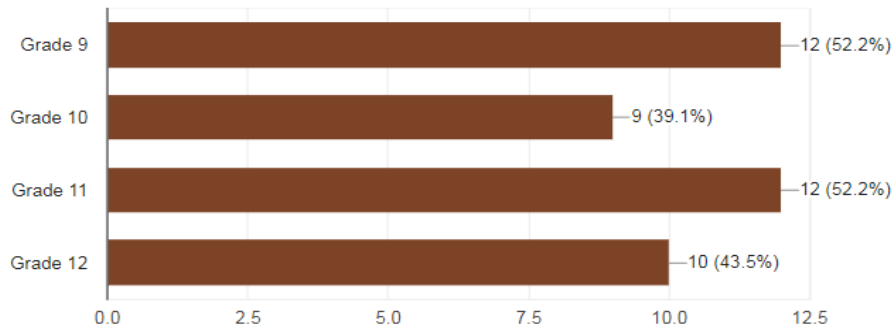
Please indicate the subject(s) you teach

23 responses



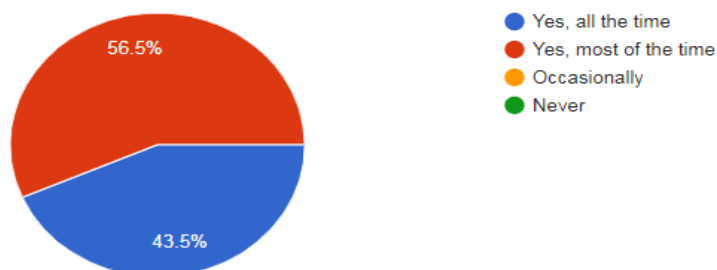
Please indicate the grade levels you teach:

23 responses



Did you observe writing coaches engage your students in sustained conversations?

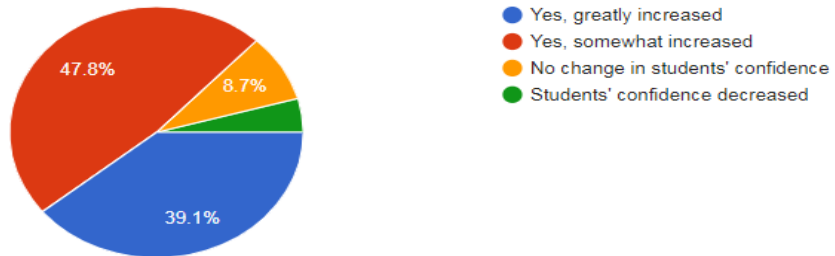
23 responses



Do you believe that your students' confidence in their writing skills increased from their conferences with writing coaches?

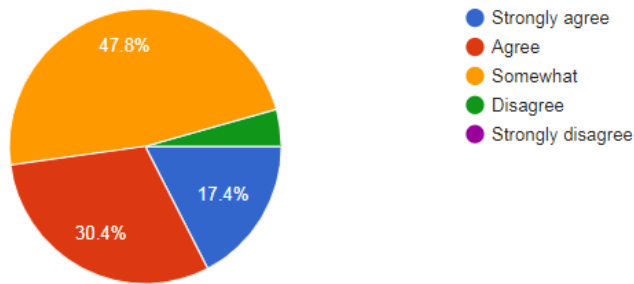


23 responses



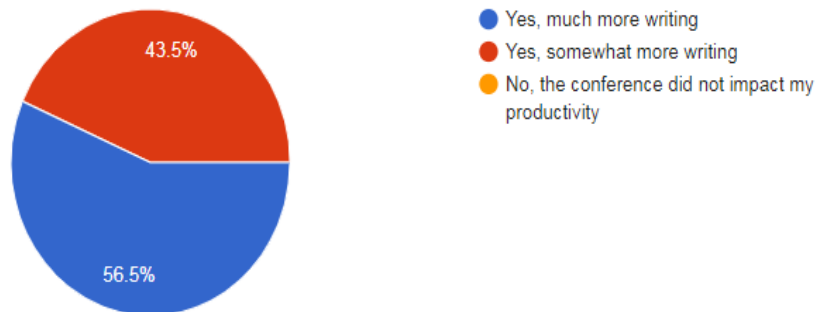
Do you believe your students improved their reading skills from their conferences with writing coaches?

23 responses



Do you believe your students produced more writing than is typical of them because of their conference time with a writing coach?

23 responses





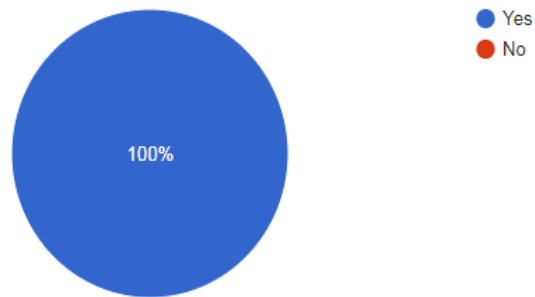
From your observations, do you believe that your students' conferences with writing coaches improved their writing skills?

23 responses



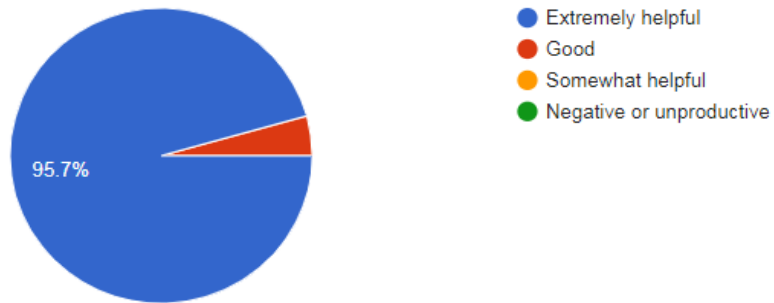
Would you recommend the RHS Writing Center to a colleague?

23 responses



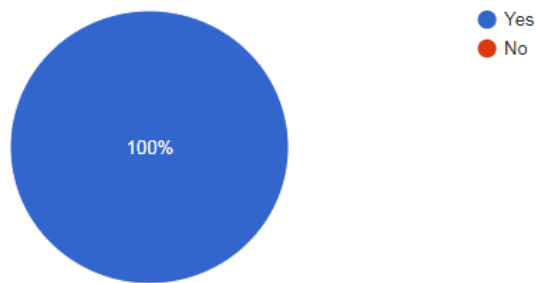
From your perspective, rate your overall experience bringing your class to the RHS Writing Center:

23 responses



Do you believe a writing center is a vital to supporting student writers at RHS?

23 responses



If you answered "yes" to the previous question, can you share your thoughts about the impact of a high school writing center on students, teachers, writing coaches and / or administrators?

I think it is a great support for students at our school. I like how the writing coaches go into classrooms and how the students can go down to the center. Additionally, I think it's great that they can email their papers for feedback.

I can honestly say that I am truly grateful for the writing center, it's teacher leader, and the coaches! It was always so helpful to have upperclassmen help out with our 9th graders. We all know that many of our students listen more to what their peers have to say than us teachers. The feedback that I got from my students was always positive. Having a coach work with a small group of math students in writing math reasoning was extremely beneficial. I saw my students produce more quality writing and it made a lasting impact. I am thankful and will always be thankful for the fact that the writing center exists for our students! Thank you for all of your hard work. It is greatly appreciated.

For the student, the writing center seems to provide a space where they have approachable help. It also helps to shift the weight of their education toward them. It is an always available resource. As for teachers, it helps me to feel like I'm not going it alone when teaching writing. It's someone else backing up what I am teaching in class.

A high school writing center offers students support on how to improve their writing. With this in mind, it makes students aware of the different strategies and techniques they can use in their writing. It also allows them to become effective editors of their own writing, which is an important skill to have moving forward.

It is such an amazing and necessary resource. Students need feedback from many people and the writing center provides that support. It also shows how writers of all levels can use support.

Writing center peer coaches send a positive message about effort, commitment and growth mindset to students they engage with. They have been completely supportive of our students' efforts & set a great tone about the value of high quality writing & the engagement level necessary to produce one's best work. Thanks for this opportunity to work with such a dedicated and professional set of students. They demonstrate all the skills, both academic and social/emotional we hope to build in our student body!

My students have a difficult time showing their work to anyone, especially mainstream advanced students, but every time, the writing center tutors are able to move past their fears and support the students at the level of help they need. I've been very impressed with the initiative of the tutors, and their skill in helping students improve their thinking and writing processes.

The environment of the writing center is one where intellectual risks are encouraged and students are made to feel comfortable putting their words down on paper, knowing that they can always revise and always improve. The space itself is both comfortable and professional, which makes students happier to be working there.

The resource of writing coaches has made my writing instruction much more authentic. That is, students learn that writing is not a rigid step by step process. Rather, they learn and internalize through conferences that writing is a process. I have seen students who hated writing at the beginning of the year turn into highly enthusiastic writers by the end of the year. I believe these transformations have happened largely in part to the leadership of the writing coaches who reinforce the reality of writing as an imperfect, nuanced process. By having consistent opportunities to discuss their ideas and troubleshoot, students begin to realize that writing, something that they once found intimidating, is actually a skill in which they can excel. They learn from the writing coaches that struggle is not a sign of failure but rather a sign of progress.

The writing center has been extremely helpful in allowing the students to have multiple readers of their work. It is extremely difficult with growing class sizes to be able to give timely feedback to students. It is also helpful for students to be able to hear from people, other than their teachers, about different writing processes one can use. It has also been very helpful being able to send the coaches drafts of assignment sheets and rubrics so that they can give feedback on the clarity and thoroughness of the work from a student's perspective.

The Writing Center is a great opportunity for students to engage in discussions about writing with someone other than their teachers. Often, teachers are at a loss at how to engage with their students in an authentic, sustainable way. Writing coaches are a perfect way to get students to think about their writing in a low-stakes environment that benefits all.

I believe that peer editing and drafting writing pieces is essential to the process as a whole. By having a writing center available, it helps the students see things from a different perspective, but not one much different from their own as they are their peers. Secondly, the tutors do not always have experience with the assignment which allows for a third party non-bias approach by them to better help the students. Lastly, it holds students accountable to produce work as they will be bringing it to the writing center rather than just in to the teacher. I find that more work is done when going to the writing center than when just passed in to the teacher. However, when that does not happen, the writing tutors are there to help them start and outline their writing pieces which leads to further enhancement, participation, and passing in work to the teacher.

It is beneficial in multiple ways! Although my seniors did not generally wish to share their work with a writing coach, my freshmen looked forward to our time in the writing center and welcomed them into our classroom. They value the uninterrupted one-on-one time with someone who is focused entirely on THEM (something that is impossible for teachers to accomplish with a large class of adolescents). I have two students who are unwilling to speak at all, and I was thrilled to see a well-seasoned coach getting both girls to discuss their work.

The Writing Center has been a valuable resource of support for my students and myself. With classroom sizes reaching up to 30 students, giving effective and consistent feedback can be overwhelming. However, the writing coaches, alongside Ms. Casper's mentoring, have provided another set of eyes to help support students in a non-judgement free demeanor. I couldn't be more grateful for them, as well as proud, as many of my former students are writing coaches.

I feel that the writing center benefits everyone involved. For the teacher, it is an additional set of eyes for trends in students' writing across the class from which a teacher can gather information and use this to retailor their focus areas in teaching writing in the classroom. For the student, the conversations with the writing coaches builds confidence and increases "risk taking" as they see the tutor as a peer, not a grading authority figure. For the writing coach him/herself, they are given insight to better their own writing when they see other's writing and get a chance to make and reflect on relationships where students' confidence is built. This translates often into the coach feeling wonderful about the idea of helping another student and bulding these relationships. From being a coach ,many former students point to this coaching time as the reason they continued on in college to pursue academic tracks where they "service" or help others, including applying for college level writing center placement jobs. Additionally , from seeing writing, the coach's writing improves also as the have had the ability to cognitively process other's writing and see the areas that need improvement or areas that offer an innovative approach to answering essay prompts, etc. For all of these reasons, a writing center increases growth for ALL involved.

The writing center is a huge help to me and my students. I have large class sizes, so it is hard to give one-on-one attention and have individual conferences. Therefore, the coaches were able to give students immediate feedback rather than wait for me to come around. Also, several students were able to communicate in Spanish and Arabic which helped my ELL kids immensely. They told me that they felt more comfortable/more at ease and less frustrated because they could explain what they meant. Lastly, the coaches are a great role model to my kids because they can see how former ELL students are now writing so well in English and coaching others!!! It definitely motivated them!.

## MSTV

### Making Student Thinking Visible

The Revere Public Schools have a long established relationship with Research for Better Teaching. Teacher classroom strategies and Administrative evaluation procedures have been implemented through professional development in the “The Skillful Teacher” and “Observing and Analyzing Teaching”. These instructional programs contain many student centered strategies and were immediately recognized as a source to support the grant. RBT developed an online video course reinforcing and expanding the SCL component of the seminars. “Making Student Thinking Visible” (MSTV) consists of 40 hours of online video instruction and classroom examples followed by teacher reflection on the videos and the use of the strategies in their classroom. The course is offered for graduate credit through Fitchburg State University. The anywhere, anytime, availability of an online course allowed us to offer more flexibility of access to our staff and resulted in a much higher level of participation than would be expected if offered as a afterschool professional development.

We were able to offer 13 cohorts over the life of the grant and 231 teachers and 18 administrators completed the course. We additionally identified 16 graduates of the course to take additionally RBT training as coaches to assist teachers while taking the course and in implementing the MSTV strategies into their classrooms. District administrators audited the MSTV course videos to view the instructional strategies being taught. RBT was contracted to work with the administrators to incorporate the MSTV strategies into their walk-throughs observations and formal evaluations.

*Ms. Nancy Barile is an English teacher and was trained as a coach in MSTV after completing the first MSTV course. She has submitted this reflection.*

Teachers at Revere High School, a low-income, urban, multicultural high school, work continuously to address the gaps in students’ learning. We are especially concerned about students who are dependent learners, unprepared to do the higher order thinking, creative problem solving, and the analytical reading and writing necessary for success in college and career. These students are dependent on their teacher to carry most of the cognitive load in the classroom. They are unsure of how to tackle new tasks, or they can’t complete a task without scaffolds. Their writing is often superficial and often doesn’t go deep enough—assignments were frequently much shorter than required, with students moaning “I didn’t know what else to write about.” These students also have difficulty deciphering prompts and engaging in meaningful discussions. In math and science, students give up easily. They don’t have the persistence necessary to persevere. They don’t know how to listen or engage with one another in insightful and respectful discourse.

In 2015, because of the Nellie Mae grant, many of us were given the opportunity to take an online professional development training course offered by Research for Better Teaching entitled *Making Student Thinking Visible* (MSTV). MSTV is designed to help ignite student discourse and to cultivate student-led learning. Its goal is to guide students to articulate their thinking, and it has helped teachers at RHS build a vigorous talk environment in their classroom that enables *all* students to become confident enough to manage their own discussions. It has also helped many students move from being

dependent learners to being independent learners capable of taking risks in the classroom in order to succeed.

The operating principles of MSTV require teachers to lay the foundation by making certain their classes are safe places for students to take risks. Teachers call on all students, pause and use wait time, avoid judgment, and validate confusion. MSTV also unlocks social and emotional learning in the classroom, as students learn to collaborate, listen, and create positive relationships. As students begin to discuss and to answer questions, teachers can ask them to explain and elaborate, restate, revoice or paraphrase, agree or disagree, add-on, compare thinking or return to previous thinking. Rather than a whole group discussion, where the same two or three students answer most of the questions, students work in pairs or small groups, while the teacher facilitates—the students must work their way through each question themselves. It took time for some of us to get used to the MSTV model. Teachers needed to refrain from being the “sages on the stage,” who provide students with the answers to difficult questions. We had to be willing to be patient and to see students squirm a little—finding the answers to questions took some time, some trial and error, and some deep thinking.

Those of us who used MSTV in the classroom watched our students’ ability to examine and interpret a text or problem improve significantly—and without help. MSTV has enabled shy and more reticent students a chance to speak up and have their voices heard. These students feel much safer answering questions in their group than in front of a whole class. Teachers are more certain that all students now participate in class discussions, and this has enabled students to develop their curiosity and to dig much deeper into content.

In order to sustain MSTV in our school, teachers who completed the training were able to become MSTV Coaches, who provide one-on-one assistance to teachers as they took the online course or as they took the course as part of our district’s professional development. MSTV coaches assist other teachers in implementing MSTV in their classrooms. Teachers observe coaches using MSTV, and coaches observe teachers, providing feedback, making helpful suggestions and offering materials for engagement. Many coaches create MSTV materials (stored in shared folders) so other teachers have access. Coaches also created training modules to ensure MSTV sustainability in our school. MSTV coaches have “Drop In” and “Study Group” MSTV sessions, where teachers can ask questions and request specific help in implementing MSTV. Coaches gather data about the success of MSTV use in our school, with respect to formative and summative assessments and standardized testing, and they also incorporate student anecdotes into that data. In the summer of 2018, MSTV coaches presented a workshop for administrators so they would understand MSTV and recognize its use in classrooms. MSTV coaches continue to provide MSTV training in our school.

As one of the first teachers to complete the MSTV and also to become an MSTV Coach, I have had enormous success using MSTV in my classroom. MSTV has ensured all my classes are truly student-centered, and the results have been phenomenal. In 2016, I implemented MSTV strategies in my sophomore college prep class. Many of these students were reluctant learners. Some were formerly limited English proficient. Many had not had much academic success. MSTV helped these students take charge of their learning, so they could move from being dependent learners to independent learners. The results for those students on our state test were outstanding. Many earned “Advanced” on the ELA portion of the test. Overall, the class earned the highest growth percentile in the school: 77%. MSTV was the only new initiative in that class. This past year, I used MSTV in my sophomore pre-AP class. Students did so well in the class, I urged them to take the Advanced Placement Literature and Composition test—

despite not having taken the AP Literature and Composition course. This was unheard of. Nine students from that class earned qualifying grades on the Advanced Placement test. I attribute MSTV as the reason for their success.

## MSTV Coaches

*The Making Student Thinking Visible coached narrative was submitted by Mr. Ethan Costello. Mr. Costello is the chairperson of the MSTV Coach Committee.*

One of the greatest challenges to Professional Development is sustaining the new strategies over time. All too often effective and engaging PD makes an initial splash, only to slowly fall out of practice as teachers return to the path of least resistance. In 2015 Revere High School's principal Dr. Garcia brought Research for Better Teaching's *Making Student Thinking Visible* in to RHS. The teacher engagement and impact on classroom discourse was immediately apparent. This motivated us to begin working on making the training an integral part of RHS by providing the training to as many teachers as possible and creating the infrastructure to prevent the practice from falling away.

The Making Student Thinking Visible online course received positive reviews and word of mouth spread quickly. Teachers immediately began to adopt the strategies to improve classroom discourse and raise the rigor of all class discussions. Discussions began about ways to keep this training fresh and active in the school culture. Administration and a small number of select teachers consulted with Research for Better Teaching to create a plan to sustain the initiative.

The first step was to train MSTV coaches. These coaches would support teachers through the MSTV course and provide opportunities to both observe MSTV best practices and receive timely feedback on their incorporation into practice. The first group of coaches was trained by Mary Ann Haley of RBT. Each coach created, delivered, and filmed an MSTV lesson and met with the trainer to experience the process. Later, all potential coaches met to review videos and simulate the coaching process with one another. This initial group of eight teachers began coaching teachers enrolled in the MSTV online course. All of these teachers had access to coaches for in person or recorded session analysis of their teaching.

Quickly the coaching group encountered some issues and worked to overcome them. First, we realized an MSTV buzz around the building was created organically, but began to wane as time went on and most teachers had already received the initial training. The coach team developed MSTV drop in sessions. These promoted sessions were held before and after school. Snacks were provided and coaches were present to answer questions, explain the training, and troubleshoot lessons. This worked to sustain interest and provide a low stakes environment for teachers to discuss ideas with colleagues and exchange best practices around MSTV. Next, we saw many teachers did not fully utilize the coaches to get the most out of their MSTV training. After discussing the issue with administration, we added the coaching sessions to the requirements of the online MSTV course. These additions served to counter the issues.

For MSTV to be sustainable, the administrators responsible for teacher evaluation were brought on board. Initially, all administrators (principal, deputy principal, assistant principals, and the humanities



and STEM Directors) completed an audit of the course and attended a training session with Jon Saphier, the CEO of RBT. These sessions included classroom observations of MSTV practices. Later, the coaches presented to the district-wide administrators meeting in August 2018. We presented an overview of MSTV and provided essential “look-fors” in teaching. We made the administrators aware that MSTV is a strategy that can be seen more in the student actions than the teacher’s. Giving administrators the tools and language to discuss MSTV strategies with teachers was vital to its continued success.

Finally, the coaches were tasked with creating an in house course to replace the online MSTV course. This plan was altered to continue to provide the MSTV online course for teachers new to the district while adding a supplemental in-house course to refresh teacher graduates of MSTV. An orientation course for the new district teachers was also identified as a need. It was decided to implement the in-house training during the district director’s meeting professional development schedule. Coaches created and revised a 5 session introduction and experienced course over 4 years. Because stipends would no longer be available, Dr. Kelly approved 3 in-districts credits to be awarded to teachers upon successfully completing the new implementation course. Work commenced on this 6 in- person session and 5 online session course over the summer of 2019 by four of the experienced coaches. The intention was for teachers to attend the bi-monthly directors’ meetings and the implementation course during the alternate months. The course work consisted of evaluating videos of RHS teachers, readings, discussion boards, lesson planning and reflection. This was to be run by the coaching team, while the initial online training would be provided by the continued district funding of the RBT online course.

## Cultural Competency Training

In March of 2015 the first of several seminars was offered in Cultural Competency. This professional development was provided by Dr. Kalise Wornum of KW Diversity. This training was enthusiastically received by teachers and became one of our most popular instructional opportunities. Teachers were able to immediately utilize the strategies in their classrooms and were pleased with the results. The response to the seminars was so positive that participants requested additional training. Dr. Wornum developed a level 2 course that would train teachers to be a school based resource for principals to assist in cultural competency professional development. This trained cohort would expand the program through the district and assure sustainability of the initiative.

The CC I seminars were conducted on two Saturday sessions for a total of 16 hours. CCII training seminars were held on one Saturday for 8 hours of training. 137 staff members completed CC I training and 41 graduates of CCI completed the CCII seminars.

*The following reflection was submitted by Mrs. Nancy Barile. Mrs. Barile was a member of the first cohort of CC and chaired the SCL Cultural Competency Committee. She also participated in the initial CCII seminar offered in May of 2018.*

Because there is a disconnect between staff demographics and student demographics at our school, it is absolutely essential that we, as educators, address this disparity and work to recognize and understand societal, ethnic, and socioeconomic influences that impact our students. Communication is a critical skill in culturally responsive teaching, and we wanted to learn more ways to effectively reach and teach our students. As educators, we knew that if we were not culturally responsive to our students, we would not be able to engage our students in learning. We needed to work to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with our students across culture, while being aware of our own world view. In this way, we can provide the educational experience that our students deserve. For these reasons, the Nellie Mae grant was used to help our teachers become more culturally proficient in the classroom.

In 2016, five teachers from Revere High School took part in the the four-day Montgomery Institute in Maryland - Montgomery County Education Association's model for culturally responsive teaching. Part of a ground-breaking partnership with McDaniel College, Westminster, Maryland, this professional development explores the theory, research, and practice of culturally responsive teaching—Equity and Excellence in Education. The MCEA's training provided our teachers with the skills necessary to develop and lead this work in their own schools. As a result of participation in this course, teachers created several community building activities in our school, including hosting all-school concerts with bands like Sierra Leone Refuge All-Stars. We worked with students to create videos, which celebrate our city, community, and school. Our "Humans of Revere" project enabled us to hang large photographs and accompanying stories about our students around the school. We created a cultural competency curriculum to be used in Advisory to help initiate important discussions about issues of diversity.

As culturally responsive educators, we want to be able to ensure that all curriculum will be delivered to our students in a way that is responsive to the experiences of our student population, and we want to be able create bonds with our students that are built on trust and respect. Over 100 teachers at our school completed cultural proficiency training with Kalise Wornum and KW Diversity, Inc., a consultant firm specializing in cultural proficiency and community conversations to support difficult conversations

regarding race and cultures. Dr. Wornum’s services are designed to help school districts improve teaching and learning while training educators to become culturally proficient. The training provided us with tools and strategies for fostering healthy and respectful debate in our classrooms, including creating a safe discussion space. We learned how to ensure that our students check and evaluate sources, especially around topics of diversity. In particular, teachers learned how to “mark the moment” — especially important if a student drops a verbal bomb — a controversial or inflammatory statement. This involves taking a deep breath before responding, asking questions, and introducing new ideas. Adding new ideas to the discussion helps to diffuse difficult situations and often leads to a more meaningful dialogue.

The Nellie Mae grant also enabled us to create Professional Learning Groups (PLGs) focused on cultural competency (CC). These groups examined our school culture and worked to increase communication in our school to ensure equity and access for all students. For example, we worked with guidance counselors to ensure our undocumented students knew about dual enrollment opportunities with local colleges so that these students could earn college credit while in high school. We created signage to ensure students knew where to get feminine hygiene products so this would not be an obstacle to their school. And we became the liaisons for our students who experienced behavior that made them feel unwelcomed or targeted at our school. Our goal was to ensure that all Revere teachers—new and veteran—worked to value diversity in our classrooms, to respect and accept differences, and to work to understand the dynamics of difference that can cause issues and problems in our classrooms. As culturally aware teachers, we worked to respond to difficult situations and to recognize the importance of knowing and understanding our students’ background and culture so that we can forge bonds of trust and respect that will impact student learning and growth. Our training worked to ensure that our curriculum also acknowledges and is responsive to culture, and we want to continue to work on designing student-centered instruction that facilitates this goal. Working with parents and families is also an important and necessary facet of our goal, and we worked to overcome barriers (such as language), which can stand in our way. Our trainings told us that to be truly culturally competent, we must be able to learn not only about our students but FROM our students, which means listening, interacting with them, and modeling for them.

We have continued to sustain the work began with the training we received as part of the Nellie Mae grant, including within our school’s Competency Based Learning focus and in our school’s professional development offerings, including this year’s Directors Meeting workshop which focuses on Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain.

## Restorative Justice

Using Restorative Justice strategies was recommended to the staff as a means of change for the culture of discipline at RHS. An initial team of 6 teachers and 4 students attended Restorative Justice training at Suffolk University in the spring of 2018. They completed both level one and level two training consisting of two 6 hour sessions for each level.

These participants became the RJ committee and began planning sessions for future staff training. The initial intent was to increase funding in the 2018-19 budget to send more teachers for training. The committee realized that it would be important to train more staff at a faster rate to assure that RJ was part of the school culture. They developed a training model and scheduled a series of 6 hour sessions for the summer and fall of 2018. During these sessions they were able to train 85 teachers in RJ principles.

The committee contacted one of the Suffolk instructors and asked him to address the faculty on the opening day of the 2018 school year. The instructor, J.D. Fergus, was well received by the staff and was asked to work with PLG leaders during the summer and fall of 2019. This work was essential in reinforcing the original training and embedding RJ principles into the school culture through PLG staff meetings.

*The Restorative Justice initiative at Revere High School is explained below by Michael Bonanno. Michael was a teacher of Psychology at the school and was an ongoing participant in student activities. The rapport that he established with students was evident when students approached him with their idea to implement RJ at the school. Michael was an original participant in the training at Suffolk University and co-chaired the school RJ committee. He was instrumental in planning and instructing the in-house teacher training. Since his retirement in June of 2019 he has worked part-time as the Reboot facilitator.*

During the 2015-2016 school year, members of the School Improvement Team and Student Senate approached their advisors Ms. Bulger, Mr. Fellowes, and Mr. Bonanno about the possibility of bringing Restorative Justice Practices to RHS. Student leaders had attended a state-wide leadership conference that past summer and heard peers from other public schools talking about RJ Practices at their schools. With the support of Dr. Garcia, the students put together a presentation for administration and the School Improvement Team about Restorative Justice Philosophy, Goals, and Implementation, as well as nation-wide success stories at other high schools.

The students believed that RJ philosophy aligned with the goals of RHS and would:

- Allow students an opportunity to participate more widely in school culture
- Provide teachers with effective strategies to manage classroom behavior expectations while at the same time continue building relationships.
- Promote a climate of equity among students and building staff supporting the desired outcome that all voices be heard.
- Implement an alternative approach to school discipline.

The student presentation was well received, their idea was given serious consideration via subsequent school-wide subcommittees and School Board discussions throughout the next school year (2016-2017).

At the start of the 2017-2018 school year, Dr. Garcia approached the student/teacher subcommittee with the exciting news of approved Nellie Mae support for the training of teachers, students, and administrators through the school year at 3 Restorative Justice Level Trainings (2 days each) at Suffolk University Center for Restorative Justice. The implementation of Restorative Practices was well underway at Revere High School.

In the 2017-2018 school year, Restorative Practices (in the form of “circles,” “talking pieces,” and “group norms”) were piloted in advisory classrooms, student extra-curricular activities, and teacher meetings.

By the spring of 2018 there was a growing interest in Restorative Practices among the faculty and the decision was made to run voluntary teacher workshops that summer. Eighty-five teachers attended two day workshops on how to bring Restorative Practices to their classrooms and how RJ would accomplish equity, relationship-building, and content instruction goals.

The 2018-2019 school year saw that Restorative Practices were commonly found in classrooms, and teachers were reporting successes in building relationships, affirming expectations, and promoting accountability. A survey of teachers gathered data on current use of RJ and needs for further professional development. Teachers were finding that RJ strategies synthesized other teaching practices such as Making Students Thinking Visible and Social Emotional Learning. In addition, in order to include parents and families as part of our school community, presentations and discussion sessions were held for the RHS Parent Teacher Organization (on 3 separate occasions). Restorative Practices has now become one of the main pillars (focus areas) of the high school and is spreading throughout the district with teachers and administrators at other Revere Public Schools being trained in RJ techniques.

In order to help make Restorative Practices part of the fabric of Revere High School, we began a pilot program called Reboot. Reboot is a discipline alternative where students can take have a “time out” from their classwork with the goal of self-reflecting on their behavior, discussing with other students and faculty, and designing their own self-monitoring and goal achievement plan. With the many shifts in climate and culture among all stakeholders at RHS in the past few years, we identified a need to build and sustain community by utilizing a restorative mindset, and to create a culture of accountability for students, staff, and families. Reboot is a place where students can go to accomplish this (currently available 2 days a week). Modeled after similar programs at other schools, the theory is that if RHS implements a time and space where students will participate in restorative and reflective practices when conflict and harm are done, then students will learn ownership and accountability for their behavior, and all stakeholders will have the opportunity to resolve and restore the harm done to the school community. To date, all stakeholders can report successes, and data is being collected to evaluate student growth and cultural changes in the building.

Some student feedback: (paraphrased from their sheets)

- “I really didn’t think I did anything wrong, and then I used harsh words towards a teacher. Now I know to think before I speak and go up to the teacher personally”
- “On my low days I would freak out over anything. In the moment I would black out and all my thoughts are flowing crazy fast. Now my good days are great. I tell myself I can’t get into trouble and mind my business, give myself a second to regroup and calm down. I need to remember to do this.”
- “I have no friends in my classes, and classes are too long. Just knowing I can stop by Reboot when I need a break instead of skipping or walking around helps.”
- “I didn’t really care about skipping classes. At Reboot we talk about it and seniors give advice from their mistakes.”

**STOP**

**T**ake a Breath

**O**bserve how this is about to go bad

**P**roceed with a better choice

## External Learning Opportunities

To advance and reinforce our commitment to Anywhere, Anytime, student learning the grant initiated and the district sustained a position in the guidance department to support External Learning Opportunities (ELO). The position was initially filled by Mrs. Diana Finn and she began to develop partnerships and internships for students.

*Diana was promoted to an administrative position at the end of the first year and was replaced by Mrs. Tiffany Currie. Mrs. Currie has submitted the following reflection.*

RHS has provided expanded opportunities through the Nellie Mae grant in the areas of college, careers and external learning for students. I started in my role as ELO Coordinator in August of 2016. Over the past 3 years, we have expanded opportunities in the areas of College, Career and External Learning. Students have been able to move to a more flexible high school schedule which has allowed students to take advantage of both internships and dual enrollment at a higher rate. Students now have the flexibility to build Dual Enrollment into their existing RHS schedule alleviating an often burdensome 5th class. Student interns can also spend 2 or 3 blocks out of the building in quality placements as they develop skills and learn about different career fields.

In 2016 our opportunities were moving forward with placing approximately 30 interns within the community at partnering sites. With the support of Nellie Mae, we have been able to move the program to a more flexible school schedule that allows students to explore opportunities beyond the traditional 4 block schedule. In the fall of 2016, we placed 17 interns in the community. The capacity and sites have grown over the past 3 years. We completed the 2018-2019 school year with over 180 students participating in the internship program. Internship sites are continually being developed based on student interest. We are still in need of quality placements in medical and STEM fields that are designed for high school skill levels.

Since 2016 our Dual Enrollment program is moving in the direction of Early College designation in the next year through a grant application with DESE/DHE. RHS will be working with Northshore Community College to secure DESE/DHE Early College Designation hopefully for the fall of 2020. This partnership will allow RHS to provide more opportunities for RHS students to develop meaningful course pathways while in High School with the goal of completely a minimum of 12 credits at the college level. Our partnerships with NSCC have allowed 5 students to participate in the Gateway Program. Gateway provides students who are at risk of dropping out of high school the opportunity to enroll in a supportive community where they can both obtain high school and college credits to ensure high school completion.

We are moving forward to a spring 2020 course as we enter into a new partnership with NSCC and Year Up where we will offer *CPS 100 Information Technology and It's Applications* as a gateway course to the pathway. Students can also enroll in individual courses free of charge through Early College.

Supports for the college and career process have increased over the past few years. Many of our first-generation students do not have the opportunity to visit colleges. Our students through the Nellie Mae grant have visited college campuses throughout the school year and summer college boot camp. Fall 2019, we are offering 10 campus visits to top the number of students who have had the opportunity to see themselves on a college campus. 27 college admission representatives have visited RHS this fall as

we have been increasing the number of college reps who meet students at RHS during the school day and after school.

NSSC offers monthly on the spot admissions at RHS and Salem State University continues offering on the spot admission. RHS has been able to support approximately 80 students each in the Massachusetts College Application Celebration where students work with admissions counselors to submit a college application in a supportive school community event. We have continued to support our high achieving students with programs like Posse Boston and Questbridge. In 2018 we had our first 2 Questbridge Scholars attending Washington & Lee University and Dartmouth College. These intentional partnerships provide life-changing opportunities to our students.

Along with college information, we have been able to provide financial aid information beyond one parent information session per year. All juniors and seniors are exposed to the FAFSA on the day of the college fair, individual meetings, and workshops throughout senior year. We have partnered with Revere's Citizens Bank to provide financial aid workshops to senior advisory classes with the goal to touch all interested students. The RPS partnership with Inversant has provided support to approximately 80 families per year to assist families with the college process and savings for college. We cannot encourage students to apply to college unless we support the financial aid process.

Summer College Boot Camp has provided the supports and time for students to engage and prepare for the college process prior to the beginning of senior year. For 6 days in the summer of 2019 students used their time off to prepare by visiting colleges in June and working on applications in August. College admissions information, essay writing workshops as well as college financial aid information, was provided to 35 students and 8 parents. Freshman and sophomores will be participating in UMASS Amherst Pre-College day at the Mt. Ida campus to explore different college majors.

We shifted the Let's Get Ready SAT and College Preparation program from the summer to the fall to make it more accessible to all students.

Since 2016 we have added Career Awareness opportunities like ASVAB administration at RHS, STEM week career speakers, alumni career speakers, fall/spring job fairs, and Construction Trade workshops along with Women in Trades information sessions. These sessions help to expose students to trade programs or military opportunities.



## Competency Based Learning

*The following reflection on Competency Based Learning has been written by Mr. Adam Marto and Mr. Joshua Miranda. Both Adam, a SPED English teacher and Joshua, RHS Robotics instructor, have been members of the CBL committees from initial trainings.*

In the spring of 2015, a group of approximately 10 educators at Revere High School (RHS) began learning about and implementing Competency Based Learning (CBL) practices with monthly committee trainings. This was done under the guidance and facilitation of Greater Schools Partnerships (GSP). This group of teachers read about, discussed, and looked at examples of CBL lessons, units, and grading rubrics/policies. The group went on a number of school observations to see CBL being implemented in schools throughout New England. These teachers learned about selecting power standards to grade students on, about creating formative and summative assessments linked to these standards, about creating lessons and giving feedback directly linked to the Power Standards, about offering revisions for assessments, and about separating a Habits of Work grade from the students' competency at meeting the Power Standards.

During the 2015-2016 school year, this group of teachers began implementing CBL practices in their classrooms, while also continuing to meet monthly to discuss progress and continue learning about it. These committee trainings continue on a monthly basis through the present, although as of this year, GSP is no longer working with RHS. This work was successful in training a core group of teachers at RHS in CBL practices who were then able to help expand its use in the school.

After this group of teachers had spent a year or two implementing CBL in their classrooms, they planned and executed a summer professional development training ("CBL 101") for teachers hoping to learn more about CBL, or for those hoping to refine their practice. These trainings aided teachers in learning about such aspects of CBL as using Habits of Work, using formative and summative assessments, developing grading rubrics, and in the setup of their gradebooks. The following year there was a "CBL 102" training that was developed and offered as well as the CBL 101. This second training went more in depth for teachers who were ready to move beyond the basics of CBL practices. Dozens of teachers participated in each of these trainings and started implementing aspects of CBL in their classrooms.

Over the last few years, as more teachers have been refining their CBL practices and others have been trying aspects of it, professional development trainings have been offered through the Director's Meetings. There was a school-wide set of trainings on using Habits of Work and the ways to assess and utilize them in the classroom. Various rubrics to assess and reflect on Habits of Work have been created, modified, and disseminated to teachers for classroom use. There have also been numerous trainings on how to design and implement formative and summative assessments, on grading practices, as well as trainings on project based and performance based assessments. At this point, teachers throughout the high school are required to assess students on their Habits of Work separately from their content/skill knowledge as measured by formative and summative assessments. These trainings have further prepared the faculty to move towards a more comprehensive set of CBL practices.

Currently, there is a core group of teachers who have been part of the CBL team and others who have taken the trainings and now teach and assess their classes according to CBL practices. These teachers have their assessments and assignments aligned to a core set of power standards that are continually assessed throughout their courses. They assess and have students reflect on their Habits of Work. They

assess students with formative assessments to look for strengths and areas needing more work and with summative assessments that make up the majority of the quarter grade. Their gradebooks are organized by standards assessed, formative assessments, and Habits of Work. These teachers offer differentiation in their lessons and assessments and offer retakes and revisions as part of class policy, usually with the higher grade prevailing on the assignments. Rubrics, based on the standards assessed, are used to offer feedback as well as to assign levels of competency/proficiency. Furthermore, these teachers make themselves available to other teachers on their prep periods and after school to support other teachers who are still learning to implement CBL.

In order to engage the entire faculty with these practices, the CBL committee is now responsible for half of the school year's twice weekly Professional Learning Group (PLG) meetings. Members of the CBL committee are leading the different content area PLGs in order to help them select Power Standards out of the Curriculum Framework Standards to focus their teaching and grading on. The plan for the year is to ensure alignment across grade levels within content areas, to select Power Standards for their classes and define proficiency for these, to select and create performance based assessments that will allow students to show proficiency in these standards, and to implement and begin to assess their effectiveness.

The goal for the end of the 2019-2020 school year is for all content classes to have Power Standards selected with descriptions of proficiency/competency in each standard. Each class should have at least one summative assessment (ideally a performance based assessment) aligned to each standard and these should begin to be implemented across all academic classes.

Through professional development, PLG work, and continued refinement of their own CBL practices, the CBL team has taken significant steps toward making CBL practices an integral part of teaching and learning throughout RHS. There is still work to be done to maintain a shared CBL vision across the school and to implement additional CBL practices, with retakes and revisions likely being the next step in the school-wide implementation of CBL.

The work of the CBL team will continue in the coming school years to help facilitate school-wide implementation. They will work with other school committees and the administrative team to review school and district policies to begin better aligning them with CBL practices. Next school year will see teachers aligning all of their assessments to their Power Standards and using rubrics with proficiency language to assess student progress. In the years to come, the CBL team will work with the Grading Sub-committee to redesign the school's report card to be able to report out grades by Power Standards and to have a separate Habits of Work grade. Future plans include building time into the schedule for re-teaching and reassessing of Power Standards, work to communicate the school's vision and plan for CBL to the School Committee and to parents, and to continue to ensure that new and veteran teachers have the resources and support they need to implement CBL practices as a core part of their teaching and assessing of students. Further work will also include looking at school attendance policies for adjustment to CBL practices as well as considering attainment of Honors level work with the highest level of proficiency on rubrics. The CBL team will continue to guide the school's progress here for the foreseeable future.