

**The Ridgewood Public Schools ELA
6-12 Curriculum and Program Review**
Five-Year Cycle 2017-2022

**ELA Department Study Findings &
Recommendations May 21, 2018**

ELA Department Mission

The mission of Ridgewood Public Schools ELA program is to cultivate critical thinking through the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of ideas that can be effectively communicated through coherent written and oral arguments. Throughout their course of study, students will engage in research and examine all genres of literature to prepare them to be active problem solvers.

ELA Curriculum Study Timeline

- **Year One, 2017-2018: Program review, research, and recommendation.**
 - A committee of teachers and administrators researched best practices in the content area and reviewed the current program, student achievement, and perceptions of staff, parents, and students. The committee's recommendation is made to reaffirm or revise curricula and/or program.
- **Summer of Year One, 2018: Curriculum writing, revising, and reaffirmation.**
 - A committee of teachers and administrators develop new or revised curricula, research and recommend professional development and instructional materials to support implementation.
- **Year Two, 2018-2019: Implementation of new or revised curriculum and materials, with consistent professional development as needed.**
- **Years Three and Four, 2019-2021: Monitoring and revising as needed.**
 - Implementation continues. Achievement and feedback are monitored. Modifications are made if needed.
- **Year Five, 2021-2022: Begin to prepare for next study of department.**

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Standards Guiding Study

- In middle school, ELA New Jersey Student Learning Standards are separated by grade level. In high school, the standards are bridged over a two year cycle: 9-10 and 11-12. Every grade level contains the following standards:

Reading (Literature and Informational Texts)

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
- Range of Text Complexity

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes (argument, explanatory, narrative)
- Production and Distribution of Writing
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge
- Range of Writing

Standards Guiding Study

Speaking and Listening

- Comprehension and Collaboration
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Language

- Conventions of Standard English
- Knowledge of Language
- Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

- **When appropriate, the following standards are incorporated into the curricula:**
 - 21st Century Life and Careers: These standards are outlined generally for all grade levels and more specifically for grades 4, 8, and 12.
 - Technology: These standards are outlined for grades 6-8 and 9-12.
 - Social and Emotional Learning: These standards are outlined generally for all grade levels.

Rationale

The New Jersey Student Learning Standards explain the “what” of our curriculum review. They outline detailed objectives for every grade level, in every domain of language learning. The Ridgewood ELA department is challenged to find the “how” and the “why” of what we teach. These factors have led us to the first year of study and investigation.

Before we began reflecting on the status of the curricula, we discussed trends in our course offerings. Throughout the last five year cycle, many recommendations have been made to introduce and implement more interdisciplinary programs. Parents, students, and teachers recognize the value of connecting learning experiences across disciplines. The success of the AHLISA, American Studies, American Experience, and RAHP programs have furthered the desire to create more opportunities for students that offer this type of learning. However, the size of the high school and the implications to scheduling prevent increasing the number of programs. Therefore, through research, discussion, and implementation, the ELA department has recommendations on how to integrate learning to provide a rich program of study for all Ridgewood students.

Year-One Research Study Process

- Integrating Themes
- Understanding by Design
- Essential Question
- Grammar/Writing Articulation
- Mindfulness Strategies in Reading and Writing

Year-One Research Study Process

- **Integrating Themes Across the Curriculum: February 17, 2017**

- Professional Development Day

- Drake, Susan and Rebecca Burns. *Meeting Standards Through Integrated Curriculum*. ASCD, 2004.
- Jacobs, Heidi Hayes. *Curriculum 21 Essential Education for a Changing World*. ASCD, 2010.
- Jacobs, Heidi Hayes. *Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation*. Hawker Brownlow Education, 2004.

- **Essential Question Development and Implementation: April 17, 2017**

- Professional Development Day

- McTighe, Jay and Grant Wiggins. *Essential Questions: Opening Doors to Student Understanding*. ASCD, 2013.

Year-One Research Study Process

- **Understanding By Design Unit Creation: April 24, 2017**
 - Department Meeting
 - Wiggins, Grant and Jay McTighe. *The Understanding by Design Guide to Creating High-Quality Units*. ASCD, 2011.
- **Grammar Articulation Grades 6-8: April 24, May 15, and June 12, 2017**
 - Department Meetings
 - Crovitz, Darren and Michelle D. Devereaux. *Grammar to Get Things Done: A Practical Guide for Teachers Anchored in Real World Usage*. NCTE, 2017.

Year-One Research Study Process

- **Presentation of the Eighth/ Ninth Grade Blended Curricula: April 2017**
 - Connecting texts with a common course guiding essential question: *What does it mean to be human?*
- **Development of the Eighth/Ninth Grade Blended Curricula: June-July 2017**
- **Interdisciplinary Themes Selection by High School Leadership Team: August 2017**
 - Sixth: Diversity
 - Seventh: Community
 - Eighth and Ninth: Humanity
 - Tenth: Truth
 - Eleventh: Responsibility
 - Twelfth: Empowerment

Year-One Research Study Process

- **Grade level teams established for curriculum review: September 18, 2017**
 - Creation of course guiding essential questions relating to grade level theme.
 - Interdisciplinary Teams formed with grade level high school ELA and Social Studies teachers who explored connections under the grade level theme during Enrichment mornings: September 2017-March 2018.
 - Teacher creation of grade level unit, utilizing “Understanding by Design” model, grade level theme, and course guiding essential question: September 18, 2017-December 20, 2017.
 - **Wiggins, Grant and Jay McTighe. *The Understanding by Design Guide to Advanced Concepts in Creating and Reviewing Units*. ASCD, 2012.**

Year-One Research Study Process

- **“The Reflective Educator Workshop”**: October 19, 2017 and January 25, 2018
 - Articulation of mindful reading strategies with middle and high school teachers from Bergenfield, Cliffside Park, Dumont, Elmwood Park, Fair Lawn, Garfield, Hackensack, Lyndhurst, Mahwah, New Milford, Park Ridge, Pascack Valley, Ridgefield, Riverdell, and Tenafly
- **Exploration of Best Practices in Reading Instruction with Grades 6-12:**
November 13, 2017
 - Lehman, Christopher and Kate Roberts. *Falling in Love With Close Reading*. Heinemann: 2014.
- **Peer Observation of Reading, Writing, and Discussion Best Practices 6-12:**
December 2017

Year-One Research Study Process

- **Grade Level Teams reviewed created units, observed best practices, and published curriculum to determine what should be kept, deleted, or added. Selection and proposal for new texts: January-March 2018**
- **Interdisciplinary Design Workshop: February 1, 2018**
 - Articulation of interdisciplinary implementation with Problem-Based Learning and connecting themes with middle and high school ELA and social studies teachers from Cliffside Park, Cresskill, Dumont, Elmwood Park, Fair Lawn, Fort Lee, Hackensack, Hasbrouck Heights, Leonia, Lyndhurst, New Milford, Pascack Valley, Ridgefield, Ridgewood, Riverdell, and Wallington. (Over 70 teachers and administrators)

Year-One Research Study Process

- Review of grade level curricula for alternative assessments. Creation of alternative assessments and alignment to standards: March-June 2018
- Surveys conducted and reviewed:
 - Staff: January 2018
 - Parent: April 2018
 - Student: May 2018
- Outline potential revisions and additions for curriculum writing: May-June 2018
- Revise and write curricula according to the Curriculum Review findings: June-July 2018

Our Program Practices and Delivery

- **Best Practices**
- **Benchmark Districts and Their Practices**
- **Placement Practices**
- **Articulation Practices**
- **Program Delivery**

Best Practices

- **The following practices have been researched and explored with the intention of further implementation in the curricula revisions:**
 - **Interdisciplinary Curriculum Design and Implementation:** Using integrated themes to connect subject areas and disciplines.
 - **Understanding by Design:** Teachers plan backwards from the summative assessment, connecting all formative assessments to this “end goal” and to the essential question for the unit of study.
 - **Essential Question:** Framing all learning with a bigger question that challenges students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate their learning to create knowledge.

Benchmark Districts and Their Practices

- **Schools Reviewed**

- Bergenfield, Cliffside Park, Cresskill, Dumont, Elmwood Park, Fair Lawn, Fort Lee, Garfield, Hackensack, Hasbrouck Heights, Leonia, Lyndhurst, Mahwah, New Milford, Park Ridge, Pascack Valley, Ridgefield, River Dell, Tenafly, and Wallington

- **Common Practices**

- Enriched programs
- Writing Process
- Some implementation of reading/writing workshop
- Summer reading
- Exploration of Mindfulness Strategies
- Interdisciplinary Programs and/or units of study in core curricula

Our Placement Practices

- **Middle School**

- All students progress through grades 6, 7, and 8 under the core Language Arts curriculum specific to their grade levels. In January of eighth grade, ELA and social studies teachers make recommendations for ninth grade core and enriched (Literary World Views) placements based on students' writing level, intellectual curiosity, and work ethic.

- **High School**

- English placements at the high school level follow the same criteria as the middle school. Recommendations for honors and AP courses are made based on students' writing level, intellectual curiosity, and work ethic. Course placements are fluid; students can move in and out of honors/AP classes based on evaluation of the entrance criteria. To ensure a transparent and fair evaluation of writing, grade level teachers created common rubrics. Performance is communicated, so that students and parents understand the placement recommendation.

Our Articulation Practices

- **Middle School**

- This year, core teachers have articulated a Grammar Continuum for grades 6, 7, and 8 which includes skills that will be reviewed from the previous year, mastered during the current year, and introduced for mastery for the following year. These units of study have been added to the grade level curricula under the title of “Language Integration Guide.” After BOE approval, this continuum will be available to view on the public and district curricula.

- **High School**

- The ninth grade has furthered this grammar continuum, which is also posted on the curriculum under “Language Integration Guide.”
- This year, each grade level team defined writing requirements for their courses. These requirements will be posted on the revised curricula and available to view on the public and district curricula pending BOE approval.

Our Program Delivery: High School

- **Core Program**

- English 9
- English 10
- English 11
- English 12

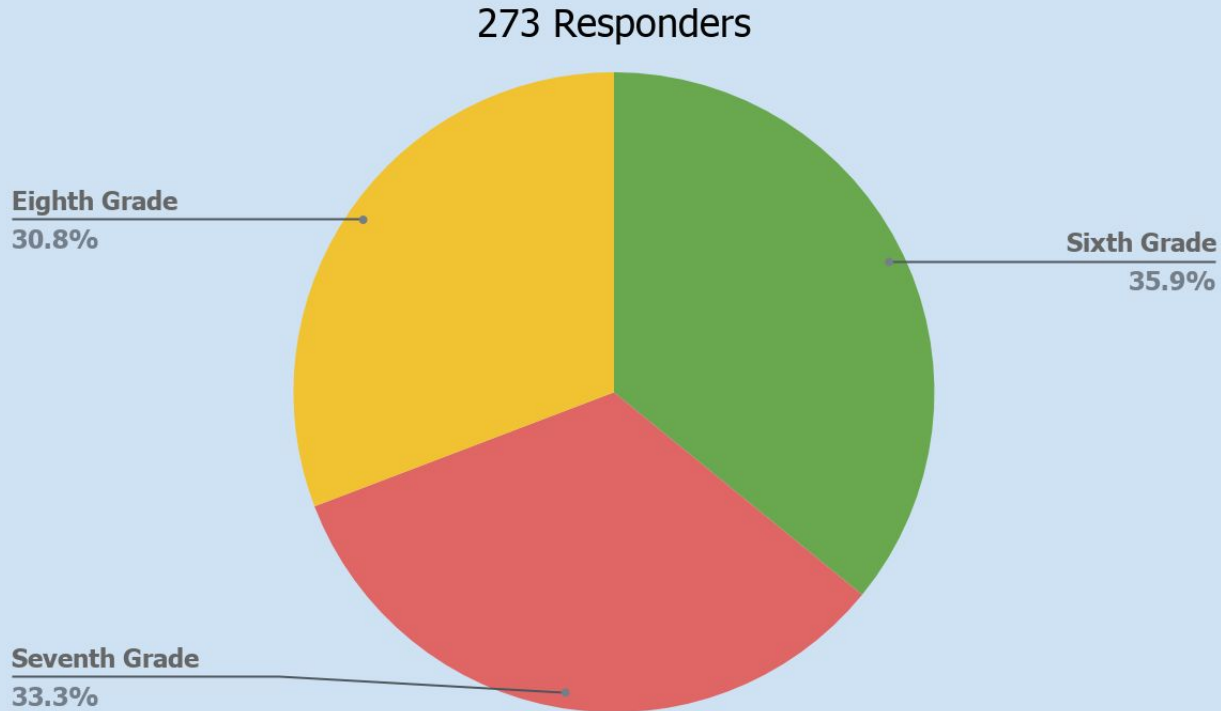
- **Enriched Program**

- Literary World Views (9)
- American Experience (10 and 11 CP)
- American Studies (Honors 10 and 11)
- AHLISA (Honors 10 and 11)
- RAHP (Honors 10 and 11)
- AP Language and Composition (11 or 12)
- AP Literature and Composition (12)

Community Perceptions

- **Survey Results**
 - Middle School Parents
 - High School Parents
 - High School Students
 - Staff

Middle School Parent Survey Results



Middle School Parent Survey Results

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total
My child has enjoyed his/her English class.	24.2%	63.4%	87.6%
My child has been successful in English.	31.7%	61.3%	93%
My child has been appropriately challenged in English.	17.6%	64.3%	81.9%
My child has an interest in English.	28.9%	56%	84.9%
I am satisfied with the English program.	18.7%	62.9%	81.6%
I am confident that my child is developing the skills in English to be successful in the future.	22.7%	59.1%	81.8%

Middle School Parent Survey Comments

- **Positive Responses...**

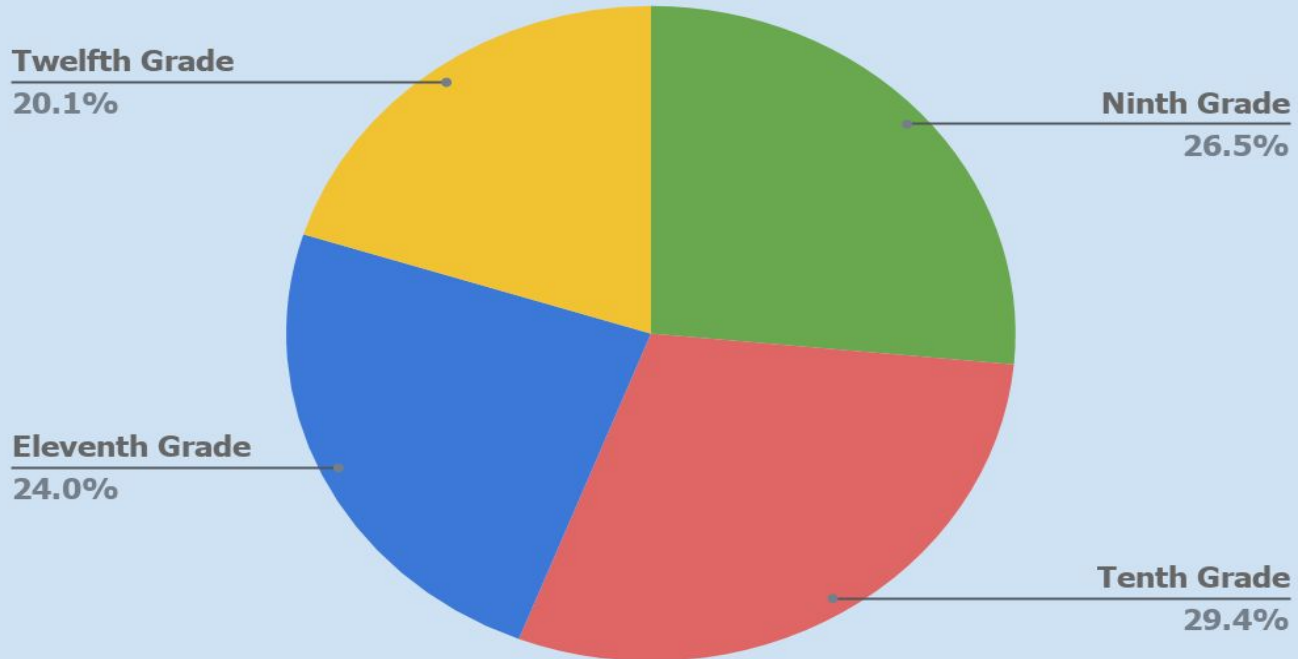
- “I think that the curriculum is fine, and I think that it is good that as the students get older, they put more focus on real world issues...”
- “My son loves his English teacher and the course of study...”
- “The Language Arts program is outstanding...”
- “My daughter loves her class...very much enjoys the teacher...”

- **Would like to see...**

- “More grammar instruction is needed.”
- “Not enough focus on vocabulary, grammar and spelling.”
- “I would like to see a curriculum posted-what books they’re going to read, essential questions, etc.”
- “I would like to see the whole class read a book together.”

High School Parent Survey

316 Responders



High School Parent Survey Results

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total
My child has enjoyed his/her English class.	33.1%	53.8%	86.9%
My child has been successful in English.	37%	55.3%	92.3%
My child has been appropriately challenged in English.	30.7%	55.7%	86.4%
My child has an interest in English.	35.4%	50.6%	86%
I am satisfied with the English program.	28.4%	55.3%	83.7%
I am confident that my child is developing the skills in English to be successful in the future.	30.4%	52.6%	83%

High School Parent Survey Comments

- **Positive Responses...**

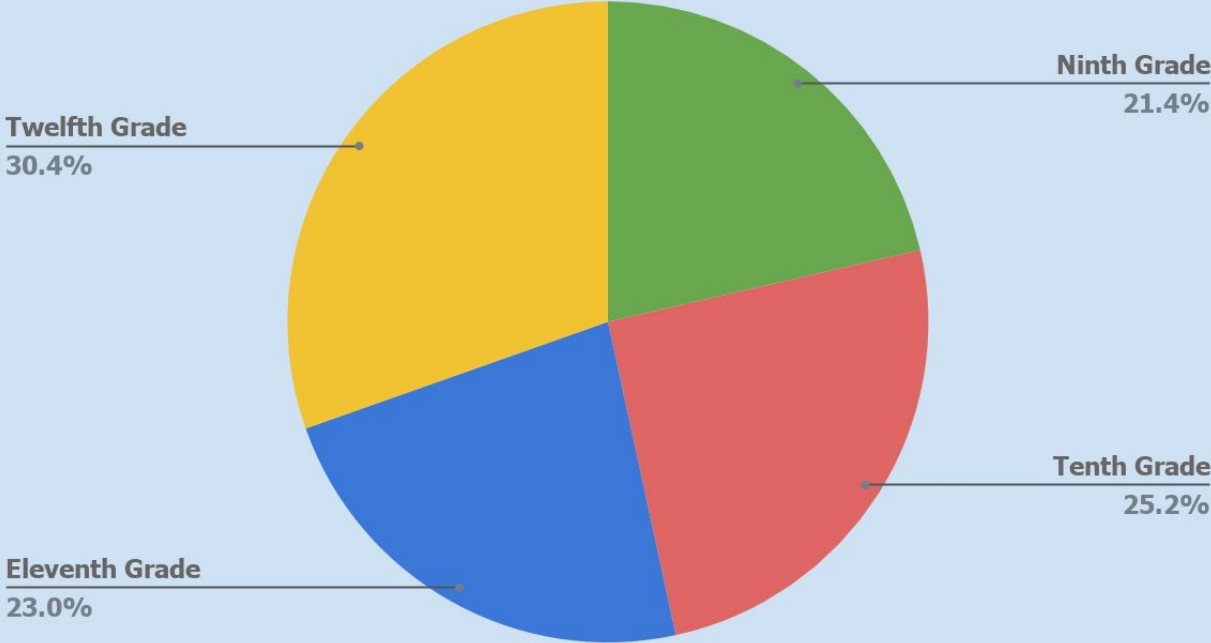
- “We have loved the variety of English offerings.”
- “We had two teachers for English this year...both amazing...”
- “My 12th grader has had a very good experience with English during her time at RHS.”
- “My daughter says her teacher is the smartest person she knows. We couldn’t be any happier.”

- **Would like to see...**

- “Needs more focus on grammar.”
- “Not enough writing in the curriculum.”
- “There should be a writing lab or area of focus on critical writing and the continuing development of writing skills.”
- “Need more varied literature.”
- “I am not saying that I do not think that my child is prepared for the future, rather I do not know.”

High School Student Survey Results

473 Responders



Student Survey Results

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total
I have enjoyed English.	28.5%	53.7%	82.2%
I have been successful in English.	39.3%	52.9%	92.2%
I have been appropriately challenged in English.	31.3%	53.1%	84.4%
My English class connects what we are learning to real world experiences.	29%	41.6%	70.6%
My English class connects what we are learning to other subject areas.	22.2%	46.3%	68.5%
I am confident that I am developing the skills in English to be successful in the future.	28.5%	50.3%	78.8%

High School Student Survey Comments

- **Positive Responses...**

- “Teachers are kind and supportive.”
- “I am thankful that the English department focuses on the more humanistic qualities of people/society than any other subject. I think that it has allowed me to appreciate literature on a different degree.”
- “I love my English class.”
- “My English class is taught very well. Keep up the good work!”
- Overall, I have been very satisfied with my English classes.”

- **Would like to see...**

- “Teachers should teach skills that we would find useful/helpful in the future.”
- “We could prioritize grammar a little more, because after studying for the SAT and ACT, I have noticed that I do not know a lot of grammar rules.”
- “Greater involvement of real world issues.”
- “I really enjoy reading, but need more help with analysis and writing essays.”
- “Reading more modern books...”

Staff Survey Results (28 Responders)

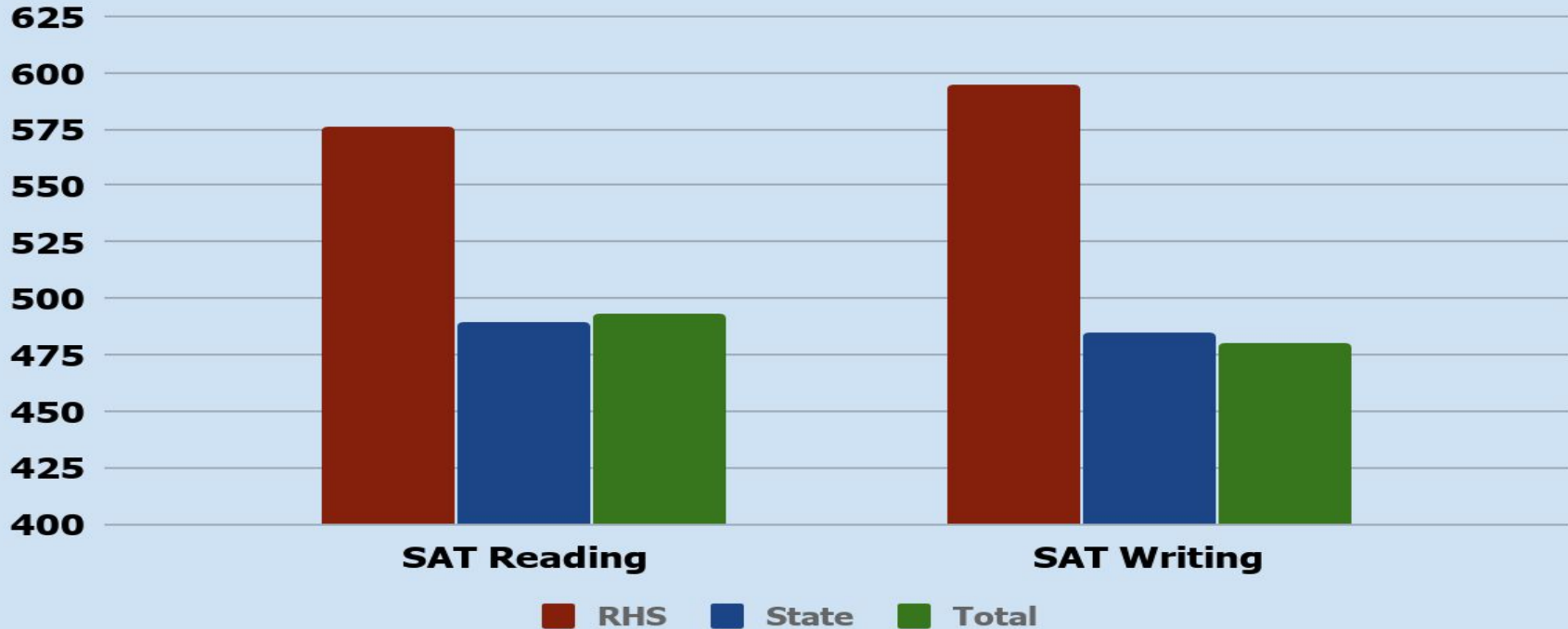
Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total
My students have a high level of interest in English.	11.1%	70.4%	81.5%
English Education is a high priority to Ridgewood Public Schools.	29.6%	55.6%	85.2%
The English Department has the resources it needs to provide a high quality education to all students.	28.6%	57.1%	85.7%
I routinely incorporate interdisciplinary connections into my instruction.	35.7%	39.3%	75%
I routinely connect what I am teaching to real world experiences and events.	75%	25%	100%
I routinely collaborate with my colleagues to articulate standards, skills, concepts and assessments.	35.7%	53.6%	89.3%

Student Achievement Data

- ACT
- SAT
- AP Exams

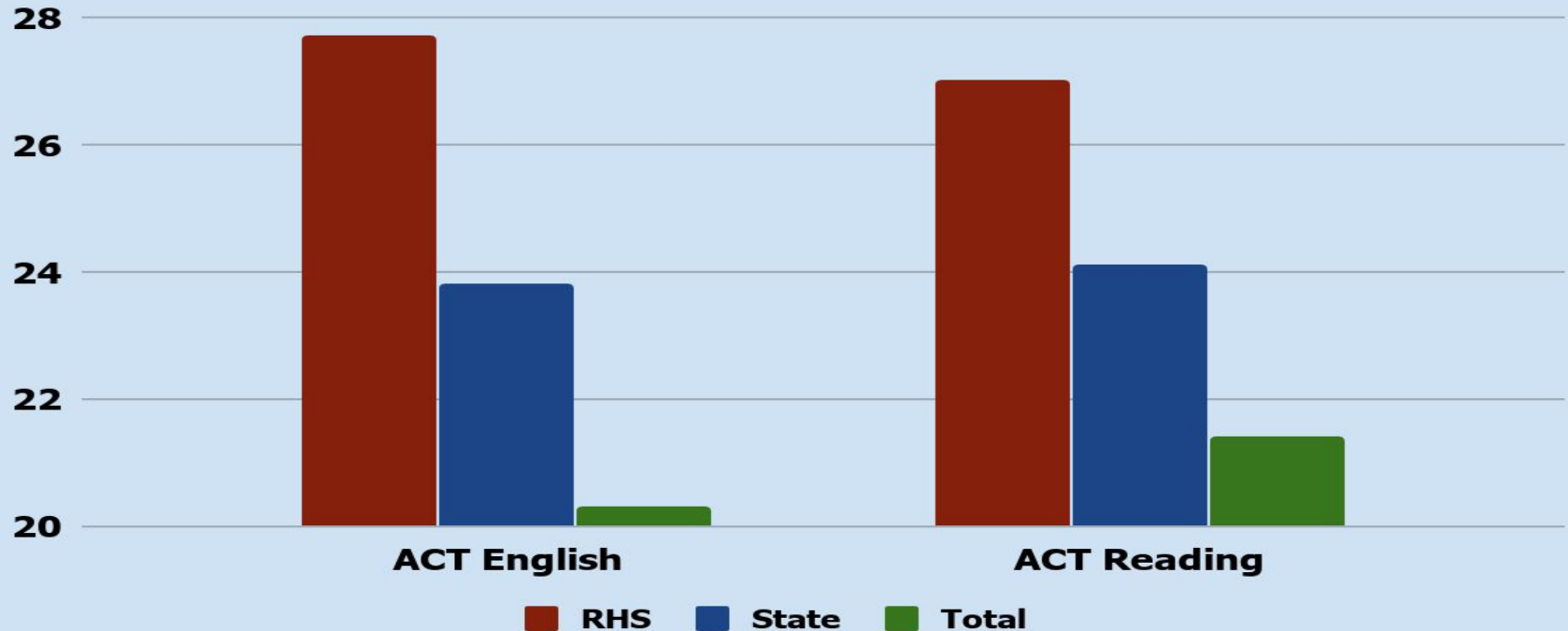
Student Achievement Data

SAT Data 2016



Student Achievement Data

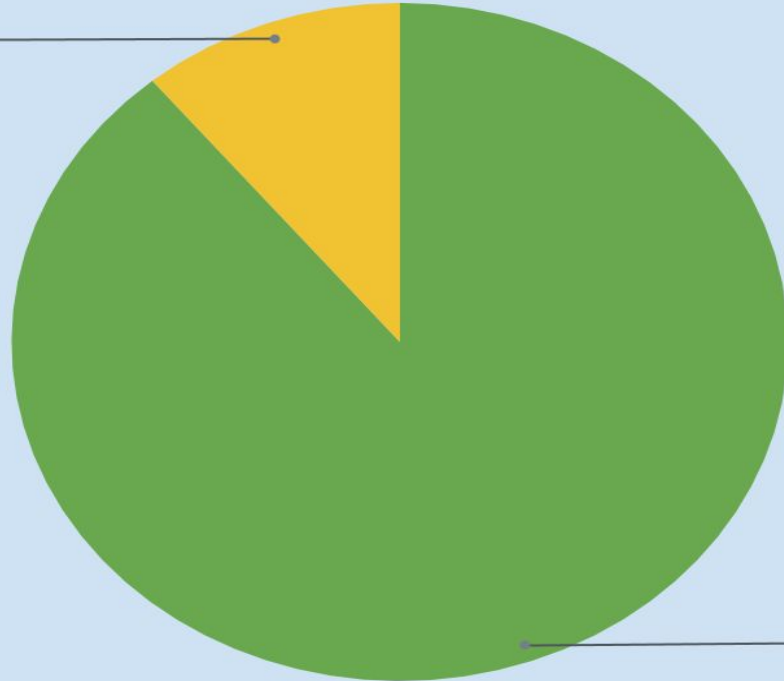
ACT English and Reading Scores 2017



Student Achievement Data

RHS AP Literature and Composition Exam Results 2017

Score below 3
11.0%

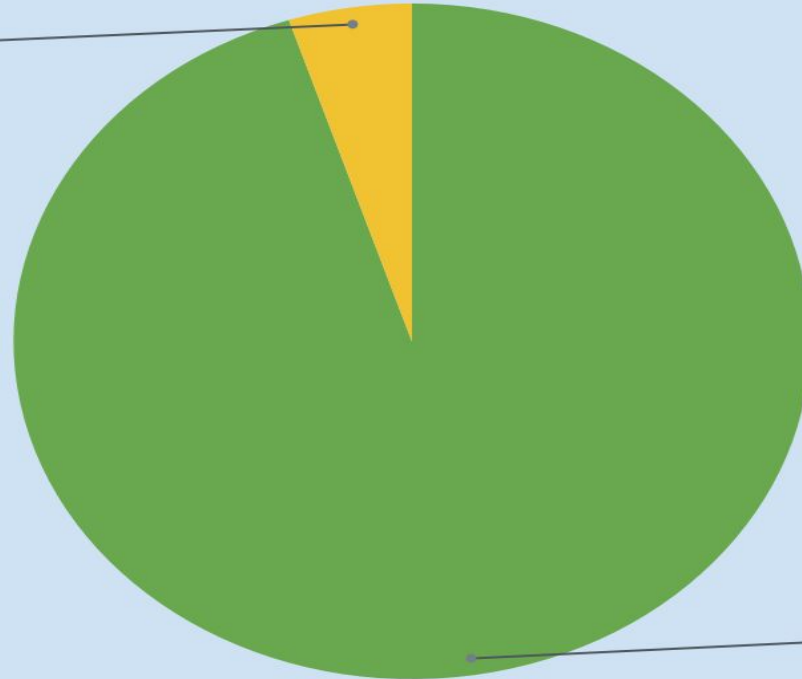


Score of 3 or higher
89.0%

Student Achievement Data

RHS AP Language and Composition Exam Results 2017

Score below 3
5.0%



Score of 3 or higher
95.0%

Recommendations

- **Grammar Continuum**
 - Grades 6,7,8, and 9 will post continuums on Rubicon this summer.
 - Grades 10,11,12 will articulate and post 2018-2019.
- **Understanding by Design**
 - Curriculum units will continue to be written with backwards planning. (Starting with the summative assessment and essential question.)
- **Thematic Units**
 - Units will continue to connect to the grade level theme.
- **Essential Questions**
 - Overarching inquiry will frame units of study and daily lessons.
- **Writing Articulation**
 - Articulating writing expectations between the grade levels will begin in September 2018.

Work Planned for Summer 2018

Middle School

- **Core Curricula to be revised:**
 - Language Arts 6 and 7
- **Selective Curricula to be revised:**
 - Dramatic Expressions
 - Literary Analysis
 - Journalism and Journalistic Writing 6,7,8
 - Mythology
 - Public Speaking
 - Shakespeare
 - Realistic Fiction
 - Speech and Debate
 - Word Study 6

Work Planned for Summer 2018

High School

- **Core Curricula to be revised:**
 - English 10 (CP, Honors, American Studies I, AHLISA I, RAHP, American Experience I)
 - English 11 (CP, Honors, American Studies II, AHLISA II, RAHP, American Experience II)
 - English 12 (CP, Honors, AP Language and Composition, AP Literature and Composition)
- **Elective Curricula to be revised:**
 - Creative Writing Honors
 - Crime and Mystery
 - Dramatic Literature
 - Literature and Film (CP and Honors)
 - Literature, Identity and Media
 - Myth, Legend and Bible
 - Philosophy and Literature

Special Thanks

Thank you to:

- 6-12 ELA teachers for their investigation, discussion, and implementation throughout the Curriculum Study.
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