**Program: Freshman Writing**

**Date of Update:** April 9, 2014

**Period of Implementation:** 9/2013—on-going

**Phase of Implementation:** Early/Middle

**Description of Program:**

This semester-long un leveled Freshman Writing course requires students to master the fundamental writing skills necessary for high school success across all content areas. The course features writing in response to informational text, applying narrative strategies in a reflective essay, argumentative essays, and persuasive speeches. Students will use the writing process, including multiple opportunities to conference and revise, to create summative portfolios of their writing. The course also includes a considerable amount of reading, particularly of informational text. Furthermore, this course embeds vocabulary instruction along with speaking and listening skills.

**Description of Implementation:**

The course was fully implemented in the fall and spring semesters at both Nashua North and Nashua South. Approximately 20 English teachers (10 at each school) worked together as a cohort to review and evaluate the curriculum. As of today, one half the cohort has completed the course.

**Program Cost:**

$2,400/curriculum writing; $2,000/on-going professional development; $6,000/materials/vocabulary text

Total—$10,400

**Updates:**

**2012-2013 School Year:**

**Development:** The course was conceived and planned in the 2012-2013 school year. Upon BOE approval, curriculum writing commenced and continued throughout summer 2013. English teachers at both North and South were recruited to teach this course and participate in the associated professional development cohort group. Only those teachers who expressed an interest in teaching the course became Freshman Writing instructors.

**2013-2014 School Year:**

**Implementation:** the entire Freshman Writing cohort met in August 2013 to begin the implementation process. Course expectations and grading criteria were developed along with rubrics and checklists. A speech curriculum and timeline were established. In September, approximately ten sections of Freshman Writing ran at each school; a total of 43 sections ran over the school year. The cohort met during the first semester monthly after school to review and evaluate the implementation of the curriculum. In December, a speech contest was conducted at each school, including a final assembly of all freshman writing students to hear the best speeches from each class. In March 2014, members of the Freshman Writing cohort met to review student portfolios and create anchor packs of exemplar papers. Anecdotal information from freshman teachers has been overwhelmingly positive:

- “Students who have taken Freshman Writing regularly respond in greater detail when asked to explain math concepts in writing.” -North Math Teacher
- “All of my students are now writing organized five paragraph essays.” -South English teacher
- “I thoroughly enjoy teaching Freshman Writing and see the benefits of this un leveled course.” -two Freshman Writing teachers from North and South

**Summer 2014 +**

**Measures of Success:** End of course Cornerstone scores, semester grades, portfolios (portfolio grade is the final exam grade)

**Request for Summer Professional Development:** One day-long workshop for the Freshman Writing Cohort to reflect on the first year, review best practices, and make adjustments as needed to unit plans and performance tasks. Cost: $3000.

**Request for Computer Access:** for optimal performance level, students need far greater access to computer labs at the two high schools. Process writing should be typed and edited on a computer; this is not currently possible at either high school.