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## **Bridging the gap: A freshman focus program**

Laurie Schonert

Catherine Vaughan-Obregon

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BRIDGING THE GAP:  
A FRESHMEN FOCUS PROGRAM

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Education

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by  
Laurie Schonert and Catherine Vaughan-Obregon

June 1998

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by  
Laurie Schonert and Catherine Vaughan-Obregon  
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Approved by:

  
Dr. Juan Gutierrez, First Reader

6-5-98  
Date

  
Dr. Steve Wagner, Second Reader

## ABSTRACT

The transition from middle school to high school has been identified as a difficult one for many students. In an effort to prepare incoming students for a greater degree of success in high school and beyond, the Freshmen Focus program was developed at Rim of the World High School (RHS) in Lake Arrowhead, California.

A team teaching approach was designed integrating the disciplines of English and science including a modified block schedule. Thematic units were written using the Oliva model of curriculum development to meet the needs of the students, school, and community while remaining true to the individual subject content requirements of the district. This paper details the evolution of the program from the early stages through implementation and evaluation. A Locus of Control survey was made of students presently completing the program. Former Freshmen Focus students were asked to answer a questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with counselors and evaluations were constructed by administrators. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results are presented indicating a measurable degree of success for the students and a favorable reflection from the administration.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To our parents, for teaching us the value of higher education.

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To Dr. Steven Wagner, whose insight into educational statistics made assessment of the program possible.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, schools have adjusted or recreated the curriculum to meet the changing needs of society. Early concepts of education and curriculum have influenced practices of today, however, many of these concepts have proven to be too conforming or only suited to a marginal number of students. Therefore, many of these concepts have fallen to the wayside. The new terms of education call for "excellence". Many critics of the American School System have fought to define and to identify "excellence" in present day models. However, many of the reports calling for reform fail to recognize what is already "right" with education. Before defining a philosophy of educational theory and practice, it is necessary to first reflect on the traditional methods and philosophies, then apply them to the needs of the current student body who are being served. The basis of educational philosophy is to provide an "excellent educational experience" to the students, and also to give society a "productive citizen" that can flourish in today's ever changing global village.

The traditional philosophies of education that have driven the development of curriculum in the United States were established by many great thinkers. Each philosopher has been determined to serve a particular set of individuals, and each of these philosopher's theories could be successful if applied and adhered to by those who drive the educational

experience. The philosophy which guides the development of a middle-school curriculum may not be the same philosophy which suits the development of curriculum at the high school level. This gap in philosophical methods is definitely clear when looking at the differences in the presentation and selection of curriculum at the schools in the Rim of the World School District. To address these differences, we would first consider where our students are coming from, then we would investigate where they are headed. The consideration of the methods employed by Mary Putnam Henck (MPH) Middle School may lead to the discovery that the school operates on a pragmatic philosophy of curriculum theory and practice. The investigation of the methods applied by Rim of the World High School (RHS) may reveal that the philosophical basis most notable is more of the perennialist viewpoint. We hope to consider a philosophy of theory and practice that can take students from a pragmatic approach to education, toward a more perennialist approach to education.

The pragmatic approach employed at MPH Middle School has been successful in terms of involving the students in learning through activity. The curriculum coordinators, like pragmatists, have built their curriculum around the democratic theory that all individuals should be educated equally. This pragmatic approach includes a "core curriculum that is student centered and that revolves around the interests of the students" (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p.



244). Many of the courses offered at MPH Middle School are team generated, involving three or more teachers working together with students in common. This creates a mini-bonding group which each of the students feels a part of. The teachers are able to build joint activities such as Tolerance Week, Colonial Days, and Science Frontiers, into their school years. Many of the courses offered at MPH are activity based courses. The units and themes of the core-curriculum reflect Dewey's theory that "the human mind is an instrument which must be sharpened by experience for use in problem solving and adjustment to the practical situations of human life. Experience, especially collective human experience, provides the best means for coping with a world always in flux" (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p. 231). The MPH Middle School administration also reflect the pragmatist theory in the commitment to the "education of every student". This administration realizes that the responsibility for the individual student's education does lie with the educational institution. "If, for example, children need unusually good schooling to compensate for an unusually unfavorable home environment or unusual physical handicaps, society must make sure they get it" (Jenks, 1988, p. 522). The administration has set up Breakfast Club, Peer Helping, and Evening Read-a-Round events to help individual students in need. The pragmatic approach to educating the middle-school student, however, may lead to a road block if they were to press

directly into a ninth-grade program built on the perennialist philosophy employed by the majority of the faculty at the high school.

The perennialist approach undertaken at Rim of the World High School has also been successful at producing individuals who do well in college, and continue to contribute to the immediate community upon graduation. However, the perennialist methods of education were not successful with the ninth grade students. The faculty who employ this method at the 10th through 12th grade level are satisfied with their approaches. They desire "an elite and unfettered approach to the introduction of the classics back into the curriculum" (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p. 229). The perennialist's ideal curriculum revolves around "the Great Books, the classics, and liberal arts" (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p. 244). The perennialists would believe that "hierarchy and inequality in the economy were justified by the twin notions of quality of opportunity and meritocracy--that the best made it to the top--assured the justice of the hierarchy" (Tyack & Hansot, 1990, p. 12-13). The "offering" of an education is quite enough, according to this philosophy. The success or failure of the individual in the system is not the educator's responsibility. Therefore, ninth graders coming from a curriculum which is student and activity based, were struggling and dropping out when faced with a subject driven and mastery level curriculum. Curriculum should become an

"equalizer" not a "sifter". Students should be allowed an equal education and adjustments have to be made to bring about this equalization for the ninth grade student.

For an education to be successful, a bonding with the subject matter or "buy in" by the student must exist. "To the degree that people are alike and share a common human condition, they need some common education" (Noddings, 1996, p. 287). Therefore, it is the intention to pull the ninth grade students in and develop what they are already familiar with-the pragmatic approach to education. We have created a core-curriculum built between the Integrated Lab Science (ILS) program and the English I program and we have established classes that block together, much the same as the team-approach that the students experienced at MPH. We have also developed a selection process at the eighth grade level that allows the students to choose to join the program. Therefore, as the progressivists have suggested, "the students have a voice in the educational experience" (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p. 240). The students are also involved in the selection of the novel units that will be covered. The first week of school a student survey is done in which they are given a brief synopsis of the core novel units that are available at the ninth grade level. They are able to choose the eight units that will be covered throughout the year. The core units have activities that are integrated into the program and include field trips into the local community,

community service, and environmental awareness. These core units are set up to reflect the student's middle-school experiences. The acquisition of knowledge should be placed, as the pragmatists and progressivists state, "around discussion and projects with the instructor as a guide, one who can present meaningful knowledge with skill" (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p. 245). However, we must still consider that the ninth grade students at the end of their time with us may have a hard time buying into a perennialist curriculum. By only perpetuating the methods and experiences utilized at the middle school level, we would not be realistically preparing them for the next step in their educational career: a sophomore course which is based on a perennialist viewpoint. The perennialists often "define the methods of teaching to be lectures, discussions and seminars that focus on the great and enduring ideas and truths of Western culture" (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p. 245). This basic method of acquiring knowledge alienates the ninth grade student. Therefore, we have integrated lectures, discussion and seminars into our presentations throughout the year. We have incorporated organization skills, note-taking, speaking and listening skills and interdependent and independent responsibility techniques into the courses. Beyond recognizing the needs of the individual student in our philosophy, we also recognize the needs of the society at large. To create individuals that are to be successful in

society, we recognize what the society needs these students to accomplish.

A recent reform report entitled "A Nation At Risk" has challenged many of the current methods employed by secondary education teachers and has challenged the existence of an "excellent" education. The report included statements which registered American students dead-last when ranked against other industrial nations. "In today's economy, people without skills won't have jobs. This is certainly true in some locations, especially in inner city neighborhoods. But the general proposition is incorrect. The jobs will usually be there but at very low wages" (Murnane, 1996, p.49). "A Nation At Risk" calls for the use of the business model. The theory seemed to indicate that what was good for business, was good for education. Recommendations to improve the educational experience were based on business and economic principles such as: "doing anything is better than inaction," catering to the customer, encouraging independent thinkers, exhibiting shared rewards and a climate that stresses dedication to central values and limited goals. A business model which encouraged excellence would also have a simple structure--one that allowed authority at lower levels. The initial reading of the report would indicate a "back to basics" approach to offering excellence that could be measured on norm-referenced tests and SAT scores. Basic skills:

the ability to read at ninth grade level;  
the ability to do math at a ninth grade level;  
the ability to solve semistructured problems  
where hypotheses must be formed and tested;  
the ability to work in groups with persons of  
various backgrounds; the ability to communicate  
effectively, both orally and in writing;  
and the ability to use personal computers  
to carry out simple tasks like word  
processing (Murnane, 1996, p.34)

are not even being provided in the present curriculum  
according to "A Nation At Risk."

Another report issued is the Bush/Clinton "Goals for  
2000." Beyond just the basic subject matter, this report  
calls for improvements in the educational experience and the  
educational environment. The report focuses on six pertinent  
goals, that if met, constitute a complete curriculum:

- 1) all children will start school ready to learn;
- 2) the high school graduation rate will increase  
to 90%;
- 3) students completing 4, 8 and 12 will have  
demonstrated competency in academic subject  
matter;
- 4) students in the United States will be ranked  
first in the world in mathematics and science  
achievement;
- 5) every school will be free of drugs and violence;
- 6) schools will offer an environment conducive  
to learning (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p.206).

Although these are lofty goals, they fail to communicate  
clearly what is expected as an ideal curriculum. Are  
assessments and a safe environment all that is to be offered?  
"Employers always complain...they're mostly upset not about  
their new employees' lack of academic expertise but about the  
unwillingness or inability to pick up new skills and new  
aptitudes--plus their bad 'attitude' and poor work habits"

(Meier, 1996, p.276). So, the "Goals 2000" report should address skills revolving around being a good citizen and mastery of problem solving techniques.

Achieving excellence and recognizing excellence in the educational experience is crucial for the success of the educators as well as the success of the students. Beyond the argument that students need basic skills in reading, mathematics and communication, there is the underlying cry for the development of the student as an independent thinker and a productive citizen. As many researchers have presented, for the learning process to continue beyond the formidable years, educators should encourage the individual student to learn how to learn. It has been argued that "children who have been provoked to reach beyond themselves, to wonder, to imagine, to pose their own questions are the ones most likely to learn" (Freedom, 1996, p.14). So, part of a well developed curriculum philosophy in education should address the need to make education a life-long process, and to present relevant lessons in the acquisition of knowledge. The individual student cannot always be measured in terms of the group, if their educational experience is to be successful. The individual must be allowed to explore their individuality and to recognize and overcome shortcomings in their own education. If "education is conceived as a process of futuring, of releasing persons to become different, of provoking persons to repair lacks and to take action to

create themselves" (Freedom, p.22), then curriculum designed to celebrate the individual and to access self-inspection must exist. As determined in the report, "A Nation At Risk", some of the properties of the business world can be incorporated into the curriculum. The ability of students to take part in the development of their curriculum and educational goals can add excellence to any program. "The crucial educational point here is that students may learn better how to learn and may have greater confidence in their capacity to learn if they are encouraged to make well-informed decisions about their own education" (Noddings, 1996, p.286). Finally, for there to be success in the educational experience, there must be commitment on the part of the entire community. "Suppose we acknowledged that all life educates but that for a mere one sixth of every child's life---ages 5-18---we have publicly joined together around what we share: citizenship" (Meier, 1996, p.247). Beyond all the rote learning and core curriculum that educators are regulated to offer each student in this democratic society, for successful educational experience to occur, the educator must also allow room in the curriculum for problem solving, individual reflection and growth, and experience in active citizenship.



## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The traditional approach to developing curriculum is associated with direct guidance from district or state level administration or indirect guidance from textbook publishers or educational resource publishers. These curriculum sources offered no proposed curriculum that integrated Science and Language Arts at the high school. Therefore, a search for literature that defined the need for this integrated program, literature concerning implementation of such a program, literature that suggests possible pedagogical methods for the program, and literature concerning the assessment of the program were surveyed.

The development of curriculum, from both theoretical and practical perspectives, must be based on the need for the particular program being introduced. Recent literature suggests that curriculum serving the transitional student has been developed for the student leaving elementary school and entering junior high. Sarah E. Lord (1994) reported that this transition takes place during a time when adolescents are also experiencing changes physically and psychologically. The students are experiencing added pressure from parents, teachers and society to succeed. Lord's commentary on the state of mind of the adolescent making the transition adjustment further illustrates the need for curriculum developed to aid the middle school student's adjustment to transitioning to high school. Reported findings determine

that "student's positive self-concepts in academic and social domains emerged as facilitative of positive adjustment across the transition, while self-consciousness in these domains proved detrimental to adjustment" (Lord, 1994, p. 162). As the reported findings of Lord's research suggest, the transition process must include social considerations and an understanding of adolescent emotional processes to develop a program that can successfully allow for the strong adaptation to the new academic environment at the high school level. The social and emotional considerations are integral in the process, as Lord reported that there is a need to provide support and protection to the students making this transition. Particular attention needs to be paid to the students self-concept and self-esteem. A successful transition program must include the social and emotional components within the initial goal setting process for "confidence in one's peer-related social skills emerged as a salient contributor to adolescent's overall self-evaluation and adjustment to junior high school probably reflects the impact of changing pressures on adolescents at this particular period of life" (Lord, 1994, p.171).

General disagreements between the middle school curriculum and the high school curriculum have led researchers to discover the elements that make the transition process for many students difficult. For example, Lord (1994) commented on the design of the secondary level

classroom and environment as restrictive. Teachers are not likely to get to know the students individually because of the structure of the six-period day and the restrictions of the departmental separation of the disciplines. This is detrimental to the social and emotional adjustments that the students in this situation need. "The study also used multiple indicators of the early adolescents' adaptation to the junior high school transition to determine whether different protective and risk factors emerge as important depending on the particular type of adaptation one is measuring" (Lord, 1994, p.162). Recognizing that coping skills and a protective environment can be just as integral a part of the developed curriculum as the academic requirements is supported by Lord's findings. Lord further articulated the actual elements that the curriculum should address. "Personal coping resources that buffer against the detrimental effects of stress on children and adolescents include a sense of autonomy, a sense of personal efficacy, and confidence in one's competence" (Lord, 1994, p.162). Based on her findings, Lord was able to define the student's ability to adjust to junior high based on the environment provided at the introductory level in junior high school.

Several factors were considered in the discussion of Lord's findings. However, the primary factor of the study that affected the student's adjustment was the teacher's fostering of the student's self-esteem in the initial

adjustment period of junior high school. After evaluating the student's and teacher's behaviors and interpretations of the success of the transitions, Lord reported that successful transition depended on the student's self-esteem level after the transition rather than the self-esteem level at the beginning of the transition. Lord's work "has demonstrated that success in academic and social domains in the sixth grade is positively related to increases in self-esteem following the junior high school transition." (Lord, 1994, p.163). Therefore, even students that had a perceived low self-esteem level at the beginning of the transition could still experience a successful transition if considerations were made through the provided programs. Another result reported by Lord suggested that "the analyses for post transition self-esteem support the hypothesis that protective factors in both academic and nonacademic self-perception facilitate positive gains in self-esteem, whereas the proposed risk factors are linked to declines in self-esteem across the transition to junior high school" (Lord, 1994, p.171).

Since the literature suggests the fostering and development of self-esteem as an important factor in aiding the student making the transition from one level to the other, the question of how to instill and foster this sense of self esteem becomes a strong consideration. In analyzing the successes and failures of middle school curriculums,

Robert Gable and M. Lee Manning (1997) determined that many students doubt their abilities and fear failure. Therefore, they are less likely to commit themselves to academics and participation in programs in which there is the likelihood that they may fail. Gable and Manning (1997) suggest that teachers make accommodations and develop special teaching methods that stress "to students a sense of control over the learning process and stress the intrinsic worth of task-oriented performance" (Gable & Manning, 1997, p.59).

Therefore, care should be taken to create a curriculum that decreases the adolescent's fear of failure and increases the adolescent's control over the material presented.

The very elements of the curriculum at the secondary level appear to work against the accommodations that Gable and Manning propose in their study. Janet Castanos (1997) criticizes the current scheduling of classes at the secondary level. She suggests that the 55-minute per period class schedule be adjusted to prevent the segregation of the disciplines. Castanos (1997) further suggests this segmentation of subject matter is often what inhibits the student's sense of control over the learning process. A program that fosters creativity and therefore encourages intrinsic value within the learning process, requires a varied approach. "Creativity often requires interdisciplinary knowledge. Some worthwhile topics of research fall in the interstices among the traditional

disciplines. Many intellectual, social and practical problems require interdisciplinary approaches.

Interdisciplinary knowledge and research serve to remind us of the unity-of-knowledge ideal" (Nissani, 1997, p.205). A successful transitional program must work with suggested reforms that foster self-esteem and encourage intrinsic value of the learning process.

Further investigation into the literature available revealed a program developed in Scotland that specifically addresses the 14 to 16 year old student's inability to perform successfully during the adjustment period. The researchers, (Brown & Munn, 1985), suggested the following methods be implemented into any curriculum that addresses the adolescent within this age group:

- 1] More diversity in the instructional process
- 2] A shift in emphasis from transmission of knowledge to organization of pupil's learning
- 3] Individualization of learning and a changed structure in teacher-student relationships
- 4] An acceptance of greater cooperation with other teachers in schools and a changed structure of relationships between teachers
- 5] Working more closely with parents and others in the community, and maximizing the use of new sources of learning in the community
- 6] Accepting a diminution of traditional authority in relation to children and towards more involvement in community life.

As with Lord's findings, the findings represented in the Brown and Munn report focus on the elements necessary to

create a healthy environment for the student transitioning from one level to the next level. "The committee was concerned that the curriculum should generate in pupils: (i) knowledge and understanding, both of self and of the social and physical environment, (ii) skills including cognitive, interpersonal and psychomotor, (iii) affective development, and, (iv) a capability to perform the various roles which life in their society entails" (Brown & Munn, 1985, p.5). These goals and concerns relate directly to the theoretical and practical perspectives that should be considered in developing a curriculum for the transition from middle school to high school.

Thus, the need for a curriculum that recognizes the difficulties the students face in transitioning from the middle school to the high school is supported by current literature. The importance of fostering an environment that generates a positive working atmosphere for the student and developing relationships and self-esteem within the student are the key factors outlined in the literature surveyed.

The need for the development of the curriculum is only one element of its creation. Beyond recognizing the need, consideration for the implementation of the program is necessary. Researchers investigate the general methods and strategies necessary to implement and construct the program. Gable and Manning focus on the initial organization of the curriculum. They recommend that teachers act as the primary

planners. The issues and decision that must be made call for a collaborative effort, with teachers acting as the guides. Gable and Manning (1997) suggest that the teachers be the ones that set goals and implement curriculum. After creating the collaborative counsel and deciding on the roles each member will undertake, organizing the teachers into teams to implement to curriculum is conducted. Hecht, Roberts and Schoon in their 1996 report, offer a clear definition of the team's responsibility: "Today's concept of team teaching has teachers from different subject areas organized into groups of varying numbers with an assigned common area of the school, a common schedule, and the responsibility for a common group of students" (p.318).

Once the initial phase of implementation is established, strategies and goals need to be articulated. Reconsidering the needs of students, a strategy that addresses the relationship between the student and teacher needs to be recognized. The findings reported by Lord in the report outlining the difficult transition many students faced upon entering junior high school, show that the traditional strategies utilized at the secondary level often alienate the students. Lord professed that the structure of the junior highs should be reorganized to focus on the middle school philosophy. "Some characteristics of the middle school philosophy that have been identified as potentially helpful are small-house programs, team teaching, and advisory



sessions" (Lord, 1994, p.173). These philosophical strategies could also be applied to the high school level to ease the anxieties of the adolescents. Another recommendation offered the strategy of integrating the curriculum. Recognizing that interdisciplinary curriculum is part of the middle school philosophy which the adolescents are already familiar with, strengthens the ideal of applying this method at the high school level. Another report recognizes that integrating curriculum can strengthen the teacher's role as the curriculum guide. "The field of curriculum can contribute constructively to the contemporary interest among practitioners only by renewing its commitment generally to school practice and particularly to patterns of interdisciplinary curriculum organization as viable options to the subject curriculum" (Wraga, 1997, p.105).

The recommendation of interdisciplinarity as a means of strengthening the implementation process was shared by many investigators in the literature available. One researcher advised that the collaborative team review the curriculum already implemented at the school site and retain the academic requirements. However, reorganization of the presentation and sequencing was the key to integrating the interdisciplinary curriculum. The inclusion phase of developing the new curriculum fortified the team's focus. "During the inclusion phase, the team's conception of interdisciplinarity incorporated lessons from their previous

experience and, without reducing teacher's autonomy, focused on the content of the various subject areas" (Kain, 1996, p.167). Therefore, it was not necessary to abandon the elements of the curriculum that were already successful. Team teachers also need to acknowledge the responsibility they have to their own subject matter before writing the interdisciplinary curriculum. Campbell (1997) emphasized the idea that teachers must first be proficient in their own subject matter before embarking on the development of a new curriculum. Kain (1996), in his study of a program that concentrated on interdisciplinary teams, concluded that many of the interdisciplinary units evolved out of course content that already existed in the subject area courses.

"Interestingly, a thematic unit emerged as one by product of their focus on problem-solving instead of specific course content. Each teacher agreed to explore a problem-solving question in class" (Kain, 1996, p.168). Kain further reported that the academic concentration was not the primary focus of the integrated curriculum. The team of teachers began to organize their time and adjust their subject matter to accommodate the student's needs. "Within a limited scope, teachers: 1) shared class time with their team members; 2) adjusted the order and substance of units or activities to accommodate other subject areas; and 3) combined classes for specific activities related to the content they were teaching" (Kain, 1996, p.167). The interdisciplinary method

of integrating subjects to aid the student's sense of control in the transition process is an important factor in implementing the new curriculum.

In a practical perspective to the implementation of the curriculum, the interdisciplinary approach may aid in the teacher's transition into a new curriculum as well as aiding in the student's transition. Literature surveyed expounded upon the process of creating this integrated program.

"Teachers continued to teach within their own disciplines, but all created lessons with an international focus"

(Campbell, 1997, p.15). Teachers could rely on the subject matter and knowledge base they already possessed. "Rather (than) totally reworking the curriculum, secondary educators need only adapt it to highlight various intelligences"

(Campbell, 1997, p.15). The team teachers, therefore, need only interpret and manipulate the knowledge and ideas they already own and need not recreate the academic material for the implementation of the new curriculum. "The very act of creation often involves the bringing together of previously unrelated ideas" (Nissani, 1997, p.206).

Recognizing the strength of interdisciplinarity will also make the shift in emphasis from transmission of knowledge to organization of pupil's learning a large part of the curriculum implementation process. "Interdisciplinary knowledge involves familiarity with components of two or more disciplines. Interdisciplinary research combines components

of two or more disciplines in the search or creation of new knowledge, operations, or artistic expressions.

Interdisciplinary education merges components of two or more disciplines in a single program of instruction" (Nissani, 1997, p.206). These proficiencies can also fortify the knowledge and understanding the students gains of self and of the social and physical environment.

Interdisciplinarians "spur us to see the various component of human knowledge for what they are: pieces in a panoramic jigsaw puzzle. And they inspire us to recall that 'the power and majesty of nature in all its aspects is lost on him who contemplates it merely in the detail of its parts, and not as a whole'" (Nissani, 1997, p.210). Further, the components of an interdisciplinary curriculum lend themselves to a stronger base of support. Castanos (1997) offers basic suggestions of curriculum that are supported by other studies which introduce practical means of implementation. Suggestions that must be considered in creating this Freshmen Focus Program include student scheduling, curriculum development, school environment, community support, and administrative support.

As suggested by the study by Castanos (1997), the implementation of curriculum should be student centered and should allow for the student's different learning styles. The proposed curriculum should be developed with the ideal of reaching the majority of students and or reaching the

student's that are generally experiencing difficulty in the transition process. Therefore, "if we genuinely intend to give every student an equal opportunity to reach high academic standards, we must understand that some students will require unequal amounts of time, says a 1994 report by the National Education Commission" (Castanos, 1997, p.34).

One way of addressing the issue of the student's needs, alternative scheduling should be implemented. Gaskey and Queen reported that "the traditional 55-minute classes were replaced with two-hour blocks of classtime. This allowed the students and teachers a more flexible use of time for extended study, projects, discussion and group work" (Castanos, 1997, p.33). Beyond just reaching the student's that need additional instructional time, alternative scheduling allows for more liberal approaches to chosen electives. Block scheduling offers the chance to explore electives and to experiment with more creative ways to reach the students. On surveys, "students have responded favorably to such proposed elective courses, and their subsequent enrollment in these classes has borne out their interest" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p.158). All these electives fit comfortably in the proposed interdisciplinary curriculum. Also, the flexible amounts of time allow for teacher's to become more creative in their teaching format. Gaskey and Queen report that "teachers who successfully use the block schedule move away from the introduction/lecture/review

format and vary the presentation of materials" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p.159). Finally, as an implementation method, block scheduling addresses the issue of making academic accommodations for both students and teachers. "Block scheduling relieves the fast-paced, pressurized atmosphere of many middle schools and offers teachers and students innovative ways to interact and accomplish their objectives" (Gable & Manning, 1997, p.59).

Interdisciplinary teaching teams and block scheduling are both recommendations presented in the literature researched. Both methods of implementation also benefit the teacher in preparing innovative methods of instruction. Creativity, independent, and interdependent unity can be fostered with the implementation criterion recommended by the literature.

Literature provided by Ediger and Campbell recognized the need to make instructional adjustments to aid in the process of guiding the pupil and in creating an environment more conducive to academic and social success of the student. After investigating a successful program at the secondary level, Ediger (1996, p.202) concluded that there are several basic beliefs behind successful teaching:

- 1] The use of the senses is of utmost importance in guiding pupil progress. Pupils were to use the senses, particularly observing and touching, in learning from objects.
- 2] Learners are to be actively involved, not passive beings, in the curriculum.

- 3] The pupil was the chooser, not the teacher. Teachers are guides, stimulators and motivators in learning.
- 4] Learners had much latitude in decision making.
- 5] Concrete, semiconcrete, and abstract materials in sequence were used in teaching pupils.

The philosophical element within the suggested basic beliefs and within the outlined principles of teaching and learning can solidify the goals and objectives ratified in the new curriculum. The basis of the development of the new curriculum being student centered rather than content centered calls for a realignment with both presentation of material and defining of the objectives of the units. To achieve objectives, "learning opportunities should be interesting, meaningful, and purposeful for learners. The attention of pupils need to be secured in order that pupils may achieve, develop, and grow" (Ediger, 1996, p.201). Ediger also commented on the descriptive differences in the ideology between Subject Centered and Activity Centered curriculum. The subject centered curriculum defined the subject matter to be presented in very exacting terms. Reading is to be presented in terms of the "pupils need to study phonics thoroughly in order to become proficient readers. Other word attack skills also need developing such as syllabication kills to unlock new words. Their are word attack and comprehension skills which need to be taught by the teachers to make good readers among pupils" (Ediger, 1995, p.268).

Science is to be presented in terms of the "content in general science stresses relatively enduring ideas and emphasizes a basic in the curriculum for all students" (Ediger, 1995, p.268). This Subject Centered curriculum is described as being detrimental to the academic self-concept of the students which could lead to the decline in self-esteem and the value of self-control in the academic areas. This Subject Centered curriculum is described as being opposed to "subject matter which tends to change as to its exactness. Content needs to be stable in its correctness and not subject to continual modification and change" (Ediger, 1995, p.269). Further, advocates of the Subject Centered curriculum at the secondary level are in opposition to "subject matter which does not contain precise, specific, and exact content. Content consisting of opinions and subjective ideas was definitely not advocated as being part of the school curriculum" (Ediger, 1995, p.268). Current instructional methods employed at the secondary level also in direct opposition to "frills and fads in the curriculum. Essential common learnings [should be] taught rather than stressing an activity centered curriculum" (Ediger, 1995, p.269). Subject Centered instructional methods counteract the basic beliefs behind the successful teaching and the basic principles of teaching and learning. The advocates of the Subject Centered curriculum argue that "Activity Centered methods are time consuming and do not emphasize that which is



basic for all to learn" (Ediger, 1995, p.268).

The literature surveyed concerning the need for the interdisciplinary, transitional program advises against such practices if students success based on self-esteem, academic achievement levels, and adjustment criterion is to be measured. Instructional methods must be incorporated that focus more on Activity Centered curriculum. Such methods should include creative approaches to the presentation of the material. Educators should have the ability to vary lessons to stress a variety of learning styles. Also, consideration should be given to the diverse populations within the classrooms. "Cooperative learning improves attitudes about self, school, and peers, and it can be used to foster open-mindedness and an appreciation for others if projects require interdependence, individual accountability, and specified objectives" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p.159). Further, if students are to adapt and adjust to the new academic level, it has been suggested by the literature that stronger relationships be built between the student and the teacher. This can be accomplished in an Activity Centered curriculum. Educators become invested in the learning process and often exceed their own knowledge level. "By employing a variety of lesson designs, along with interpretive and critical analysis, teachers can enable students to work actively with new information and become responsible for more than a simple regurgitation of facts" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p. 159). To

build on the previous experience of the student and to play on the students' strengths, attention must be given to the incorporation of a variety of methods of presenting the subject matter. As Campbell (1997, p.16) suggested:

Some educators use the theory of multiple intelligences to promote self-directed learning. They prepare students for their adult lives by teaching them how to initiate and manage complex projects. Students learn to ask researchable questions; to identify varied resources; to create realistic time lines; and to initiate, implement, and bring closure to a learning activity. Regardless of the disciplinary focus, these projects typically draw on numerous intelligences.

As recommended during the implementation phase of the curriculum, the integrated program should also be considered when discussing the instructional methods to be employed. "Many teachers use multiple intelligences to integrate curriculum, to organize classroom learning stations, or to teach students self-directed learning skill through project-based curriculum" (Campbell, 1997, p.14). The reliance of one teacher upon another to ensure the success of the students involved in the new curriculum can also support the development of superior instructional methods. Therefore, "teaching [should] be the potential vehicle for transforming interdisciplinary teaching from the state of theory to one of fact. Extending the teaching competencies of the staff through group interaction and process sharing, it is believed, improves the quality of instruction received by students" (Hecht, Roberts & Schoon, 1996, p.319).

Also, consideration should be given to the way in which block scheduling could affect the instructional methods currently utilized by the instructors. Recognizing that block scheduling is one means of creating a successful environment for the student, the instructor should incorporate strategies to make the best use of the scheduled time. Teachers have to make special considerations for students who find it difficult to remain on task for extended lengths of time. They must build movement activities into the instruction procedures. "Such movement does not have to take place every class period, and all students don't necessarily need to move. Simply assigning one student to pass out papers or locate writing portfolios that students will retrieve individually at some point during the class can help students who seem to be having difficulty staying focused" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p.159). Not only utilizing the class time to work through potential instructional barriers and learning difficulties, creative methods of instruction that lead to the evaluation and interpretation levels of thinking can be used in block scheduling. "Socratic seminars work well in a block schedule. These seminars redefine the role of the teacher as that of instructional facilitator rather than storehouse of knowledge" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p. 159). As students become successful academically, and begin to recognize the intrinsic value of the learning experience, the adjustment to

the new grade level can become effortless. "This enables the students and teachers to get to know each other better" (Castanos, 1997, p.33).

Another instructional method of strategy that is recommended is the investment in alternative assessment and student outcomes. Traditional methods employed by the Subject Centered curriculum standards can inhibit creativity and self-esteem. "Alternative assessment many take such forms as compiling portfolios, doing group and individual projects, completing surveys, and giving oral presentations" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p.160). These methods of assessment can also develop the students' social and emotional adjustment to the new grade level. The basic beliefs of giving the student a sense of control over the learning process and actively involving the learner in the educational process are directed by the activity based assessment projects. Ediger defines the methods that should be incorporated into the project assessment process. The pupil must give purpose to the project: "whatever is studied must involve purposes of the involved learner. Thus, the pupil perceives reasons for achieving and progressing" (Ediger, 1996, p.269). The pupil must be thoroughly involved in the planning stages of the project. The goals and purposes of the assignment should be determined by the pupil. To achieve goals or purposes, "the involved learner with teacher guidance needs to plan appropriate means to achieve an end.

Thus, the process of planning needs adequate emphasis" (Ediger, 1996, p. 269). The pupil must also become actively involved in the process of creating and execution of the project. The student's ownership of the project allows for the meaningful purpose in learning to occur. Learning by doing can lead to methods of authentic assessment and student accountability. Finally, the student needs to play an active role in the decision making and analysis process. The teacher remains a guide and motivator. "After a project has been completed, it needs evaluating. Definite criteria created by the pupils with teacher's guidance must be established. The completed project needs to be appraised utilizing vital standards. Individual and committee endeavors are emphasized" (Ediger, 1996, p.269). This process of activity based assessment and student product outcomes is recommended as an instructional tool for a successful students based curriculum.

The instructional methods presented in the Activity Centered curriculum define the objectives and goals associated with the transitional curriculum being developed. The methods specify the ways in which the goals and objectives outlined in the desired curriculum can be reached. Creating a strong sense of social and emotional balance within the student displays the sense of community that the curriculum attempts to establish. "Students who are members of a learning community collaborate in the various phases of

the writing process." (Maring, Wiseman & Meyers, 1997, p. 197). These projects and student-based outcomes usually do not develop a community of learners at the beginning of the program. This social development "rather, forms in the middle and in the end of the course ...it is spirit...it is a group where friendships begin and deepen and endure...it is an opportunity for partnerships and for dialogs...it is the inclusive of diversity...it grows in a place where there are celebrations that pertain to the personal matters of students as well as to academic successes and cultural events" (Maring, Wiseman & Meyers, 1997, p. 197). The adjustment and balance of the students involved in the proposed curriculum can be addressed in the instruction methods utilized. "Their social development is thus enhanced as their special needs are met" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p. 160).

Once the program has been implemented and teaching methods and strategies have been incorporated, it is necessary to evaluate the program's effectiveness. The literature available provided several methods that could be used in assessing the program's effectiveness and plausibility.

Considering the student's success as the primary focus of the goals and aspirations of the program, it is pertinent that a measure be included which measures the success of their adjustment. Within Lord's study of the transitional elementary to junior high student included several measures.

The adolescents face the challenge of developing their own personal identity. They must incorporate their needs and desires into an environment that works toward conformity. "It is not surprising then, that adolescents' self-perceptions are important predictors of their changing self-evaluation and adjustment to the transition" (Lord, 1997, p. 174). To measure the success of the program in terms of the students, a measurement tool needed to be located that could gauge their varying levels of self-esteem. Within the study by Lord, "as a measure of general socioemotional adjustment, change in self-esteem was used" (Lord, 1997, p. 165). To assess the student's change in self-esteem a "student questionnaire containing items assessing a broad range of student's beliefs, values and attitudes" (Lord, 1997, p. 165) was used. This method of assessment directly relates back to the goals of developing the new curriculum. The student centered approach to transitioning and adjustment to the new secondary level of their academic career can be clearly assessed through this locus of control, socioemotional measure of adjustment.

A second indicator of the program's success could include assessment by the instructor of the perceived academic adjustments made by the students. One way to measure this is suggested in Lord's research as well. "The seventh-grade math teacher rated each participating students on the following single item indicator: 'in your opinion, how

well is the student adjusting to junior high?' The teacher responded on a 7-point response line anchored with the following descriptors: 1=not well at all, 7=very well" (Lord, 1997, p. 166). Therefore, a combination of internal and external measures of the student's success was utilized. The student questionnaire reflecting the student's self-esteem acts as the internal assessment and the teacher rating of the student's adjustment acts as the external assessment.

A third indicator of the progress being made by the student's in the program can be the students learning outcomes that have taken the form of projects and coursework. "To show what they've learned from their projects and other coursework, students should be asked to do more than fill in the blanks and supply short answers to specific questions. They should demonstrate their higher-order thinking skills, generalize what they learn, provide examples, connect the content to their personal experiences, and apply their knowledge to new situations" (Campbell, 1997, p. 17). The projects can be used as a measure of the student's ability to complete assigned tasks and as a measure of the student's to participate in the learning experience. The quality of the work will demonstrate the student's ability to apply the methods and strategies of instruction and the expected student learning outcomes. "Above all, having students coauthor some of their assignments and participate in other team writing projects gives them a powerful exposure to



functioning within a literate environment that becomes a community of learners" (Maring, Wiseman & Meyers, 1997, p.197). This community of learners demonstrates the student's ability to perform in social and cooperative levels within the curriculum. The portfolios and projects themselves can be assessment indicators of the program's success.

Indicators that were presented in several of the related articles concerning block scheduling could also be used to assess the curriculum success. "Schools that have used block schedules are seeing their students become motivated toward exploration and discovery in their classes" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p.158). Therefore, instructor, administrative and counselor observations concerning the motivation of students in the transitional program could be used to assess the level of success of the program. Further, "evidence of an improved school climate can best be seen in the decline in the number of discipline problems reported and in the positive reports from teachers on the energized atmosphere of their classes" (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p.159). Again, interviews with or reports from support staff in the administrative or counseling capabilities could reflect the evidence of the improved school climate based on the elements introduced in the proposed program. Also, Gaskey and Queen report that "schools that have adopted block schedules report a reduction in absenteeism and drastic reductions in discipline

problems...students generally like the opportunities provided by the block schedule, and the varied teaching methods hold their attention." (Gaskey & Queen, 1997, p.160). Records of students enrolled in the program could be assessed and the students could also reflect on their personal attendance history in the interviews they participate in.

Qualitative assessment methods, such as interviews and student's reflection logs can be used to assess the program in terms of discipline, attendance, school environment, and student motivation. Successful elements of programs described in the literature may act as guides to the tone and focus of questions to be applied within such interviews. "Teachers need to 'get to know' their students each year, to establish routines, and to solve problems" (Kain, 1996, p.166). Questions concerning the students' relationship with the participating teachers could be developed. Castanos (1997) emphasizes the fact that students need to know that they are important to their teachers. Students could be asked to describe situations in which the program teachers were particularly helpful to them, or they could simply use the descriptors used by the participating teacher: 1 = not well at all, 7 = very well. In interviews, students could also comment on their attendance during the elapsed time of the program. In surveyed literature "the students participating in Project Schoolroom had fewer absences, either excused or unexcused, than their counterparts" (Hecht,

Roberts, & Schoon, 1996, p.320).

Final indicators of the program's success concern the attitudes and reflections of the participating educational staff members. "Participating teachers reported that they felt collaboration and sharing among themselves" (Hecht, Roberts & Schoon, 1996, p.320) and "all teachers spoke positively of the team approach, citing several direct benefits, including fewer discipline problems than in the past and an ability to spend more time counseling with students" (Hecht, Roberts & Schoon, 1996, p.321). Although the participating teachers may be biased in favor of evaluating the program in only positive descriptors, academic levels of students within their direction should also reflect signs of student adjustment and transitional success. In related studies performed at the secondary level, "students taught by teacher teams outperformed in almost all quarterly course grades and overall GPA's, their traditional school counterparts" (Hecht, Roberts & Schoon, 1996, p.321). Therefore, qualitative measures and indicators can hold value in assessing the program's worth and success.

### CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM

The following curriculum plan was designed for freshmen students at Rim of the World High School in Lake Arrowhead, California. It is an interdisciplinary approach combining instruction in Science and English. We are a small, rural, unified school district. This curriculum was designed to meet the unique needs of incoming freshmen in an attempt to prepare them for success in high school and beyond. The students in this program come from one intermediate school (grades 7 & 8) that is thoroughly enmeshed in the Caught In The Middle concept. The philosophy of the school that our students emanate from this is one of Progressivism. This philosophy is "rooted in Pragmatism and the aim is to educate the individual according to his or her interests and needs [with] instruction that features problem-solving and group activities" (Orenstein & Levine, 1989, p.204). The middle school is run completely with interdisciplinary teams where students are part of an intraschool family group.

The philosophy of the high school that the students feed into is in direct contrast to that of the middle school. We are a traditional, academically oriented high school whose philosophy is one of Idealism with the educational implications being that of "a subject matter curriculum emphasizing the...ideas of the culture. It seeks to create an intellectual environment for teaching and learning" (Orenstein & Levine, 1989, p. 204).

The Freshmen Focus Curriculum was conceived and written as a program integrating the disciplines of Science and Language Arts. The philosophy of the program is primarily one of Pragmatism (Experimentalism) with a bit of an influence from Realism. We represent a "subject matter curriculum stressing humanistic and scientific disciplines [with much of our] instruction organized around problem solving according to the scientific method" (Orenstein and Levine, 1989, p.204). The curriculum model best suited the development of the Freshman Focus Program is the Oliva Model. The model lends itself to the development of curriculum of "interdisciplinary programs that cut across areas of specialization such as career education, guidance, and extra class activities" (Oliva, 1997, p.157), which is exactly the program that English I and Integrated Lab Science I (ILS I) attempt to create. Also, the specificity of the steps and the clear objectives of each component made the Oliva Model an ideal choice for working with individuals from different departments. Often if a component of a method is vague or open-ended, it is difficult to come to a consensus. The Oliva Model allowed for direct discussion and specific goals to be determined in a timely manner. Finally, the choice of the Oliva Model met the criteria of allowing for "feedback lines that cycle back from the evaluation of the curriculum to the curriculum goals and from the evaluation of instruction to the instructional goals" (Oliva, 1997, p.157).

This cycle allows for making adjustments to the developed curriculum without reinventing the program each year.

The first components of the Oliva Model call for the curriculum development team to address particular needs of students in general and society in general. The Needs of Students in General that were developed in Step 1 are:

- 1] Students need to be targeted by interests.
- 2] Students need community based programs.
- 3] Students need to be prepared for the Global Society.
- 4] Students need to be instructed in independent and interdependent responsibility.
- 5] Students need to receive a core-education.

After developing these needs, it was then necessary to address the Needs of Society in General in Step 2:

- 1] Society needs productive citizens.
- 2] Society needs individuals with information, management, and interpersonal skills

After establishing these needs, it was necessary to articulate the aims of education and the philosophy of the program in Step 3. The vision is that all students will leave our program academically, socially and emotionally able to function in their next grade level. Every student should have the foundation needed to transition to the 10th grade level of the high school program in:

- 1] Common core knowledge: reading, writing scientific method, speaking and listening.
- 2] Thinking skills: learning, reasoning, thinking creatively, making decisions, and solving problems.
- 3] Personal Qualities: individual responsibility, self-esteem, ability to form social bond with others, ethics, integrity.

Once the needs of students in general and the society at large were established, it was easy to address the particular needs of the freshmen students at Rim of the World High School and the community of Lake Arrowhead and the surrounding townships. What follows in Steps 4-6 is the development of curriculum that directly relates to the individual student of the specialized Rim of the World community. These steps call for addressing the "needs of particular students in particular localities, because of the needs of students in particular communities are not always the same as the general needs of students throughout our society" (Oliva, 1997, p.155). This is very true for the students that are located in the mountain communities. The needs of the students chosen for the program are first specified. These students need a well developed self-management system which includes:

- 1] Information skills: acquire, evaluate, organize, maintain, interpret, and communicate data, and use appropriate technology to process information
- 2] Management Skills: allocate time, materials, space and self.
- 3] Interpersonal Skills: lead, negotiate, work in teams, teach and serve others, follow directions, exhibit self-control, and work effectively with individuals or groups from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The specific needs of Lake Arrowhead and the surrounding townships were then articulated as follows:

- 1] Lake Arrowhead needs individuals that have an appreciation for diversity and show the willingness to participate in activities that promote the process of understanding and accepting diversity.
- 2] The community needs individuals that have an appreciation of the arts and the creative process.
- 3] The community needs to have the opportunity to utilize existing and emerging technology.

Beyond the needs of the Freshmen at Rim of the World High School and the needs of the local community, there exists a professional obligation to meet the departmental needs of the subject matter. To accomplish this, five goals were established to assist in individualizing the program, and to help remain true to the departmental goals. These goals are:

- 1] Insure that the students have the common core of knowledge required by the state framework.
- 2] Insure that the students have the ability to demonstrate thinking skills.
- 3] Insure that the students have the ability to demonstrate independent and interdependent responsibility.
- 4] Address the needs of the individual student of Rim of the World Freshmen Focus Program.
- 5] Address the needs of Lake Arrowhead and surrounding townships.

The curriculum goals and objectives of our school are outlined specifically in the schoolwide Expected Student Learning Results (ESLRs). Therefore, Steps 7-8 of the Oliva Method have already been articulated. The faculty is involved in developing these goals and objectives, and it is the faculty's responsibility to fulfill the ESLRs at the different grade levels and within the different departments.



The ESLRs for the English Department for the Freshmen Level are:

- 1] Students will write a Narrative Essay.
- 2] Students will write a Comparison Essay..
- 3] Students will write a Mini-Research Paper.
- 4] Students will write and Speak with a command of standard English conventions.
- 5] Students will deliver an effective speech on a designated topic.
- 6] Students will read for understanding, information and pleasure.

The ESLRs for the Science Department for the Freshmen Level are:

- 1] Students will demonstrate mastery of laboratory safety skills.
- 2] Students will demonstrate mastery level knowledge of the scientific units used to measure length, volume, mass, and time including the proper use of appropriate prefixes.
- 3] Students will demonstrate the ability to measure and record raw data.
- 4] Students will apply scientific method in solving designated problems.
- 5] Students will record, report and organize laboratory experiences into a Lab Notebook.
- 6] Students will be aware of the atomic structure.

The next steps in the Oliva Method revolve around organizing and implementing the curriculum. Step 9 calls for developing methods to organize and implement the curriculum. To accomplish this, the units are based on themes and subthemes that are present in each of the content areas. These themes have been organized into flow diagrams and unit plans that reflect the different components that are evaluated at the end of the school year. The several units that have been established are based on the goals and

objectives established in Step 6. The specific areas of subject matter that are involved in the English I and the ILS I courses are described in the department ESLR. They are further articulated in the following integrated units.

The themes that have been developed include Comparing and Contrasting Elements, Analysis of Nonfiction, Development of Responsibility in the World Around Us, Development of Responsibility for Self and Others. All the units were developed to incorporate the goals and objectives designated in the previous steps of the Oliva Method of curriculum development. The first unit, Comparing and Contrasting Elements (Appendix A) is designed to focus on the early skills necessary to begin the school year. The English I goals, objectives and ESLR represented in the first unit include the development of a comparison essay, problem solving element in creating alternative endings to a drama, the interpersonal skills in acting and creating scenes, and the artistic element of illustrating images created by Shakespeare in the soliloquies within the play. The English I component of the Comparing and Contrasting Unit includes:

- 1] Romeo and Juliet (William Shakespeare).
- 2] Abstract/Concrete Nouns;  
Transitive/Intransitive Verbs.
- 3] Comparison Essay - Shakespeare's  
Audience: Pit vs. Balcony.
- 4] Problem Solving - Comparing  
Alternative endings.
- 5] Video taping of Scenes (technology  
component).
- 6] Light and Dark imagery.

The corresponding ILS I Comparing and Contrasting of Elements Unit includes also focuses on the goals, objectives and ESLR of the program. These include the technology component of video taping of the growth of plants, the problem solving element of formulating and testing hypotheses, the expression of ideas in written format, the measurement and recording of raw data, and the introduction of the safety skills within the laboratory. The specific elements of the ILS Comparing and Contrasting of Elements Unit are:

- 1] Problem Solving Lab Comparing alternative conclusions.
- 2] Filtering of Light.
- 3] Comparison of results of plants in light and dark exposure.
- 4] Vocabulary associated with content
- 5] Notebook records of lab results.
- 6] Video taping of plant growth (technology component).

The second quarter unit is built upon the elements covered in the first quarter unit. Both disciplines coordinate the units to revolve around the same main themes, and subthemes. The units are also designed to reflect the goals established in the planning stages of the curriculum. The unit entitled Analyzing Nonfiction (Appendix B) is divided into the English I and ILS I components. The goals and objectives represented in the English I unit include reading for information gathering, the development of a research paper, the refining of the grammatical elements of formal English, and writing as a method of communicating ideas. The English I component

consists of:

- 1] Novel A Day No Pigs Would Die (Robert Peck).
- 2] Mini Research Paper written in first person a famous scientist.
- 3] Expository Essay dealing with Ecology.
- 4] Verbs and Verb Tenses
- 5] Mental and Physical Verbs
- 6] Transitive/Intransitive Verbs
- 7] Reading of Selected Nonfiction Essays with topics associated with Science.

The ILS I unit further embellishes on the goals and objectives by focusing on the application of units of measurement, recording of raw data, demonstration of safety skills and the presentation of information in oral format. The Ecology portion of the unit builds on the curricular goal of developing interdependent responsibility. The corresponding ILS I

Analyzing Nonfiction Unit consists of:

- 1] Content of Mini Research Paper.
- 2] Research on the Internet (technology component).
- 3] Ecology.
- 4] Influence of sun on living things.
- 5] Plants exposed to varying elements in their environment.
- 6] Recording and Analysis of Observations.
- 7] Quarter Project-Oral Presentation of first person scientist paper.

The third quarter unit further develops the goals and objectives of the curriculum. The unit entitled Developing Responsibility in the World Around Us (Appendix C) was created to push the student into the higher level thinking skills, but also addresses the goals and objectives regarding interdependent responsibility. The goal of creating within the students a desire to express themselves in an artistic way is

the focus of the English I component of the unit. The students are assigned literature that focuses on reflection, tolerance and diversity. The unit includes a poetry project in which the students work in groups and individually on the creation of poems. They are also instructed to desktop publish the stories in the computer lab with font that reflects the tone and illustrations that reflect the imagery. This portion of the unit addresses the technology goal of the curriculum. This unit focuses on the student's ability to read for understanding and addresses the problem solving goal as the students work with fragmented sentences and run-ons. They are also encouraged to evaluate the world around them in an assigned debate on topics of interest to the students. This focuses on the objective of creating meaningful lessons that revolve around students interests. The English I portion of the Developing Responsibility in the World Around Us Unit includes:

- 1] Novel Jesse (Gary Soto).
- 2] Adjectives and Adverbs.
- 3] Imagery, Metaphor, Symbol.
- 4] Poetry Creation.
- 5] Fragments and Run-Ons
- 6] Debate Presentation Video Tape (technology component).
- 7] Desktop publishing of Poetry Creation (technology component).

The ILS I further develops the goals and objectives by involving the students in a community project. Part of the unit requires the children to create a compost pile using the knowledge they developed about light, plants, and organisms in the previous units. The compost piles are then transported to

be used in the Children's Forest Project being performed at the Elementary school level. This project involves the problem solving methods learned by the students in the earlier units and also allows the students to apply the methods involved in the Scientific Method. Students further demonstrate their knowledge of safety skills by creating particular rules that need to be addressed in the creation and follow-up portions of the project. The actual implementation of the project focuses on cooperative learning, and interdependent responsibility; two other objectives outlined in the creation of the curriculum. Students also use problem solving techniques as they discover the positive and negative applications of the labs associated with energy and biomass. Bio-ethics ties into the unit on debates presented in the English I course. The specific components of the ILS I unit include:

- 1] Environmental Science.
- 2] Composting/Service Learning.
- 3] Analysis and Synthesis of Compounds.
- 4] Energy of Plants.
- 5] Components of Biomass.
- 6] Debates revolving around Bio-ethics.

The final quarter unit incorporates all the skills developed by the student in the previous units. It is also designed as a transitional unit that prepares the student for methods and cognitive thinking skills necessary to help them remain successful in the next level of their academic career. The final unit is entitled Developing Responsibility for Self (Appendix D). The English I portion of the unit delves into

the student's perception of self and into the individual prejudices and stereotypes faced by the students. The literature is chosen to focus on diversity, role models, and tolerance. The students are encouraged to explore personal aspects of their lives through the development of the Narrative Essay and through reflective journals. Reading for pleasure is introduced into the curriculum and students are encouraged to bring outside reading into the class to share interests and hobbies. Searches on the internet, which meet the technological objective of the curriculum, include the search for name origin, ancestry, and hobbies/careers. Problem solving techniques are integrated into the curriculum as students are encouraged to search for potential career information. The goal that directs the students to demonstrate independent responsibility is also intrinsic in this unit as students are encouraged to express their narrative orally. They are also instructed to demonstrate an understanding of tone and voice in narration as they read House On Mango Street aloud. The elements of the English portion of this unit are:

- 1] Novel Human Comedy (William Saroyan).
- 2] Novel House on Mango Street (Sandra Cisneros).
- 3] Novel Pigman and Me. (Paul Zindel).
- 4] Creation of Short Story.
- 5] Narrative Essay.
- 6] Prepositional Phrases.
- 7] Faulty Parallelism.
- 8] Outside reading material selected by the students.

The ILS I course also focuses on the same goals and objectives for this final unit. The students must demonstrate their

comprehension of and application of the Scientific Method as they create a problem and present it in a formal paper to be presented to the class. Further, the students apply methodology learned in previous labs as they create crystals from materials given to them by the instructor. The technology objective of the curriculum is also met as the students work in the computer lab on a student tutorial CD-ROM focusing on Molecular and Atomic Structures. The students are encouraged to think creatively in the lessons concerning Atomic Theory and atomic structure as they create orbital models of various elements. The specific lessons included in the ILS I portion of the Developing Responsibility for Self Unit are:

- 1] Crystal Growing.
- 2] Essays on Crystal Growing Project.
- 3] Atomic Theory.
- 4] Atomic Structure.
- 5] Molecular Structure.
- 6] Research presentation on topic of interest in science.
- 7] Physical creation for oral portion of research project.

The Oliva Method Steps 10-11 call for "the specification of instructional goals and objectives" (Oliva, 1997, p.158). This portion of the curriculum development reverts back to the implementation phase of the project. Since the students come from a very pragmatic educational background at the middle school, and since the students must eventually succeed in the perennialist educational strategy after leaving the program, most goals and strategies were developed to reflect the progressive movement, pragmatic approaches to presentation, and



inclusion of perennialist methods of instruction. The rationale of the curriculum is based on the "search for things that work, regrouping, experimentation, and democratic methods" (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p.244). The curriculum is developed out of the core curriculum, is student centered, and revolves around the interest of the student. The position of the instructor is as a guide; one who can present meaningful knowledge with skill and who brings meaning and purpose to the activity. The methods used include projects, lab based and discovery based activities that students are accustomed to from their middle school experience. However, the method of instruction introduced in the Freshmen Focus Program also includes lectures, discussions and mastery learning skills that the students will need to succeed in their high school career. The examinations and assessments that we utilize "gauge how well students can problem solve, how well they can produce outcomes, and are often skill based" (Pullman & Van Patten, 1994, p.244). The environment that has been established is flexible and natural. It also includes technology and labs that reflect the interests of the students. The outcomes are often ones that demonstrate the student's ability to be a good problem solver. All these strategies reflect the progressive/pragmatic approach to implementing the curriculum. The choice of subject matter and methods employed near the end of the program more specifically address the integration of the student into the high school perennialist program.

In Steps 13-15, the Oliva Method of curriculum development calls for selection and implementation of evaluation techniques. The evaluation of the integrated program is divided into two categories. The first evaluation category is the Evaluation of Student Involvement. This is accomplished through:

- 1] Evaluation from the Counseling Office.
- 2] Locus of Control test administered to students.
- 3] Questionnaire completed by sophomore level instructors regarding students' success in the opening of the sophomore year.

The evaluation by the Counseling Office often revolves around their opinion of the instructor's ability to intervene on behalf of the students before outside or further intervention is necessary. The second evaluation category is the Evaluation of Instructional Strategies. This is accomplished through:

- 1] Self-Evaluation of Success of Individual Units based on student's performance outcomes.
- 2] Evaluation of Instructional Methods by Administrators.
- 3] End of the school year student questionnaire.

These evaluation strategies are completed at the end of each school year. The Evaluation of Instructional Strategies is completed at the end of each quarter.

The final steps of the Oliva Method call for the modification of instructional components and curricular components. Steps 16 and 17 occur naturally at the end of each school year and are the basis of in-service days and extra duty hours allotted in the summer. After the results of the

evaluations are completed, it becomes necessary to modify the different components of the program. Refinements may take place in the definition of student's needs and the needs of the community. Most modifications occur in the instructional strategies and the refinement of the subject matter introduced. The Freshmen Focus Program at Rim of the World High School has been successful in that it has incorporated the needs of the ninth grade student into the development of the program. It was clear before the program was implemented that the ninth grade student was not successful. The drop out rate, and the transition of ninth graders to alternative education programs proved this fact. The transition of students from Rim to Home School, Independent Study, and Mountain High Continuation School has declined. Through the evaluation of the program, administrative support has increased and community support has risen.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: ASSESSMENT OF THE DEVELOPED CURRICULUM

The Freshmen Focus program was developed to serve as a bridge between the differences in educational philosophy and instructional presentation that students face upon leaving Mary Putnam Henck Middle School and entering Rim of the World High School (RHS). To assess the programs effect on students, information was gathered from various sources within our educational system. Current Freshmen Focus (FF) students as well as FF "graduates" were surveyed. Teachers, counselors and administrators were also questioned. Various instruments of assessment were employed.

A questionnaire was designed to survey the opinions of former participants in the program. Using this teacher constructed instrument (Appendix E), twenty-nine FF "graduates" were surveyed probing their impression of the impact that the Freshmen Focus experience had on their education. The survey consisted of five true/false questions and four open response questions. The survey was administered orally with students responding in writing. The examiner was a teacher not involved in the program.

A two part Locus of Control was administered to currently enrolled freshmen. It presents a dichotomous variable regarding the students' perception of their ability to control their own destiny. When a person demonstrates a tendency toward the external end of the scale it indicates a passive approach to the environment wherein they perceive others, or

outside circumstances, are more responsible than themselves for success or failure. A score near the internal end of the scale indicates a belief in ones own competence and skill to affect changes. Persons at this end of the scale see themselves as responsible for their own accomplishments and declines (Rotter, 1996). Those surveyed consisted of pupils enrolled in RHS from September 1, 1997 through May 1, 1998. The control group was comprised of students enrolled in both English 1 and ILS 1 classes but not as a participant in the FF program, while all FF students surveyed were members of the interdisciplinary team during the same time period. By comparing students in the treatment group to a control sample it was our intention to see if there was any indication that the Freshmen Focus program had a subconscious effect on the learners sense of self as related to their autonomy. Twenty-eight randomly selected surveys were reported for each group.

Program evaluations already in place at the school site were used to gain the opinions of the Principal and Assistant Principal regarding Freshmen Focus. Counselors and sophomore teacher impressions of the influence the FF program has had on students were based on interviews. Evaluation of the instruction and curriculum was based on the results of the former FF student questionnaire. An overwhelming 100% of the students surveyed responded "true" to the first four questions confirming several assumptions made when initially developing the program. All students felt that expectations, consequences

and rewards were clearly defined and that by sharing two teachers with the same classroom requirements students had a good understanding of what was expected of them. The entire group of "graduates" also reported that they enjoyed the block scheduling aspect of the program and that it made learning "easier" for them. In response to the statement "The transition from middle school to high school was made smoother by my participation in the Freshmen Focus program," 85% of the students stated that the program had indeed helped them in making a successful transition.

Reactions to the open response questions confirmed the true/false results in the students' own words. Nearly all students wrote that the block scheduling helped them in one way or another. Some expressed that the "change in daily routine" made learning more enjoyable while many stated that the block period gave them an opportunity to "go into more detail on projects because of the extended time [and no need for] needing no refreshing from the day before." Generally students felt that they could complete assignments more efficiently because many of the "assignments were related" and "intertwined." Several students wrote that they had a better chance to get to know their classmates which made group work more successful. "Having the same group of students in both classes allowed myself and others to become closer friends which in return allowed us to work better." Students appreciated the joint science/English assignments and stated

that this approach allowed them to do a better job on their class projects. There were also statements reporting that because both teachers were aware of each others curriculum student understanding was increased. One student responded that the most helpful aspect of the program was the "focus on the students as individuals--a sense of familiarity."

There was somewhat of an overlap in responses to the question regarding what was most "helpful" and what students "liked best" about the program. Combined projects were mentioned by more than one student as the aspect of being in Freshmen Focus that they liked best. "When we had joint projects you could work on them in both classes and the teachers both knew and understood what you were supposed to be doing." Again the block scheduling was mentioned with statements such as "I liked being able to stay in one classroom for two periods" and "it was a welcome change of pace." The interdisciplinary approach to teaching was acknowledged by one student as a learning advantage by stating "the thing that I liked best about the program was how we made things in English relate to things in Science. For example we did investigation into a scientist in ILS 1 and then in English we learned how to write it up." In many cases some students recognized one component of the program as being helpful, others identified the same factor as being enjoyable. The consistency of the enforcement of school rules by both teachers was exclaimed by one student as being responsible for her "learning to get

myself to class on time. I'm never late to any classes this year." All things considered it seems that the students found it pleasant, comfortable and rewarding to be in an environment where they could become more successful learners.

The next question asked students "How was your success in high school enhanced by being in the Freshmen Focus program?" Many students responded to this question as it related to their success in their current science and english classes. Of the students that responded to the question as it was intended, there were various comments regarding "more focus on working in groups" and being "better aware of what high school expects" as ways in which their opportunities for success have been enhanced. Many individual comments gave further insight into how the students perceived this experience. One student mentioned that the various oral presentations helped "improve [my] vocal and people skills." Another student stated that the program helped them to improve their grades, while yet another said that being in this class "provided a strong foundation of knowledge for me to build on as I advance through other classes." A former FF student said that "it was enhanced by me learning to use my skills for longer periods of time, like on a block period," Several learners saw benefit in the interdisciplinary aspect of the program. A student wrote that "it taught me that things like science and english can come together and make things more interesting." In the same vein another student reported "it is now easier to look at a problem



from both a science and english view because these classes were so intertwined." Many students eluded to the connections that they experienced in both classes. Finally, some students remarked that it made the "transition to high school easier" and provided them with a "good start."

In reply to the last question students were asked to comment on "In what ways were you successful this year in either English or Science?" Sentiments from previous reactions were repeated with somewhat of a more content based focus. Students mentioned learning to work for "longer periods [of time]" and seeing subjects "in relation" to one another as benefits of their experience. Several students commented on being able to move up into honors English classes while others stated that it was easier "to comprehend things in science and English" classes as a result of what they had learned in their freshman year. One student reported "I think I am doing better this year in science and English. I don't know why, I just am."

The responses to the former student questionnaire were predominantly positive. Of the students surveyed, none felt a negative impact nor a lack of, influence regarding their participation in the Freshmen Focus program. The blocked periods, sharing of team members, and the interdisciplinary approach to this program were recognized by the students as the most beneficial components of the approach.

Part one of the Locus of Control inquiry utilized the

Bialer-Cromwell instrument (Bialer, 1961). Results from this investigation indicated the control group had a mean score of 15.14 with a standard deviation of 2.69 while the second part of the survey (Rotter, 1966) resulted in a mean score of 13.39 with a standard deviation of 2.55 (Appendix F). With treatment sample means at 15.69 and 13 respectively, this test yielded no statistically significant difference between the two groups. However, relative to the median score for the combined group, a greater number of students in the treatment group had scores exhibiting a trend toward the internal end of the scale. This indicates that there may exist a higher level of maturity for students participating in the Freshmen Focus program.

Counselors and administrators shared opinions similar to one another regarding the influence of Freshmen Focus participation on students at Rim of the World High School. Results showed the above mentioned stakeholders had a positive impression of the program. Since the inception of this program it was clear that the Freshmen Focus aim was to improve an area which had been identified as a problem at our site. Administrative support was present from the start with a close eye kept on our performance and that of our students. The principal, Mr. Walt Harris, observed Mrs. Obregon's FF English 1 class as part of a routine program evaluation (Appendix G). The lesson that he witnessed was part of the student preparation for the final quarter project in both English and

science. Mr. Harris made reference to how the subject matter and form were "effectively coordinate[d]" between the science and English disciplines. An important consideration during the development phase of the FF program was to make certain that none of the subject content was watered down or overlooked when merging the two disciplines into one core program. The principal recognized the blend of the instruction and the student assessment methods being discussed in the English class that he observed. Examples from the science research paper were cited as being used to instruct the learner on proper writing techniques. Mr. Harris' closing remark was "Excellent lesson!" The RHS assistant principal, Mrs. Debbie Wogen, observed Mrs. Schonert's Integrated Lab Science class (Appendix H) for purposes of staff evaluation on the day that the FF students were giving an oral presentation to the class of their combined scientist research project. Mrs. Wogen noted that she observed Mrs. Schonert's use of "multiple strategies to assess differences in academic learning through her participation in the Freshmen Focus program." She further mentioned that Mrs. Schonert "makes a conscious commitment to experiment and alter identified resources that may be needed for Freshmen Focus activities." Mrs. Wogen went on to state that the teacher "has been recognized for promoting academic rigor and showing marked increase in academic achievement in Freshmen Focus student performance," These very issues were given special

consideration when developing the FF curriculum and it bodes well that these points were observed and noted by the RHS administration. Although these were teacher evaluations, both evaluators acknowledged the Freshmen Focus program as a successful approach to addressing the needs of the ninth grade students in the Rim of the World Unified School District.

Counselors at RHS responded to interview questions. One counselor remarked "I believe it [the FF program] saves freshmen who might otherwise fail. I expect better chances of success for students who start high school in this program." Another stated "GPA's move at least one half a point in at least 80% of students [participating in this program]" The above quoted counselors went on to remark that "I can't imagine any [drawbacks]" and it is a "great program!" When asked to respond to reasons why the program may influence students in a positive way counselors cited the "sense of belonging" that students experience in this program. Whereas "students in the 'regular' program can perceive themselves as anonymous, a student in FF knows that he or she is a valuable human being. This is the perfect environment for growing-- especially for the reluctant learner." Counseling staff, as well as participating students, acknowledged the blocked periods of time as providing opportunity for more creative learning activities than might be afforded in the conventional fifty minute periods. When asked to give specific examples of the ways in which FF has accomplished the aim to make a

smoother transition from middle school to high school, counselors identified the value of teachers working as a team with students in common. "It allows student problems to be recognized and dealt with much more readily and effectively than with teachers working independently." Sophomore teachers have commented on the Freshmen Focus "graduates" as well. A tenth grade English teacher stated that students emerging from Freshmen Focus seem "better equipped" to deal with the demands of high school. One science teacher noted that FF students appear to have acquired "better coping and organizational skills" than other students that they have observed.

The results of this project show a strong correlation between the Freshmen Focus curriculum and success for its participants in this Rim of the World High school program. Students having completed this program stated unanimously that it had a positive impact on their education. Counselors and administrators hailed it as a successful approach to solving a very real concern at RHS. "The Freshmen Focus program offers a real advantage to ninth graders at RHS."

There are some possible drawbacks to the implementation of such a project another school sites and perhaps some even to expansion of the program at Rim of the World High School. Research indicates that directing teachers into such an assignment may be met with failure if all parties are not receptive to the philosophy of interdisciplinarity (Nissani, 1992). Effective interdisciplinary teams are comprised of

teachers who wish to teach in that style and are comfortable working together. Another possible problem that may arise when trying to establish a similar program is scheduling. Block scheduling of teams can be difficult and time consuming.

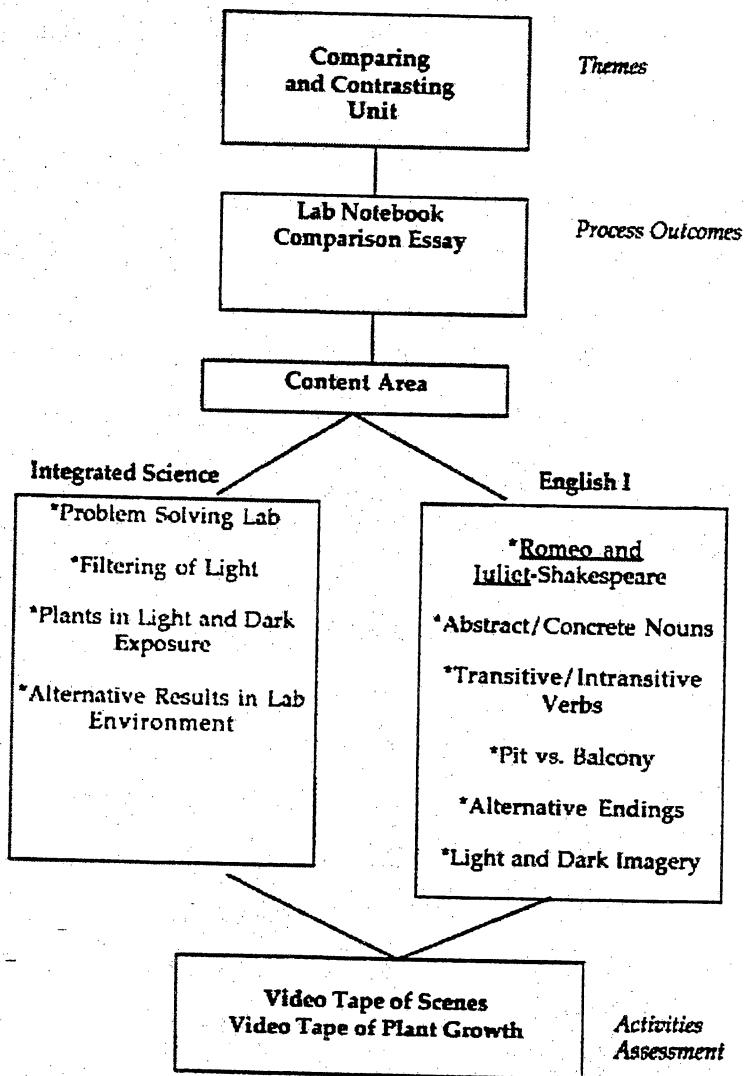
Although current RHS counseling staff is agreeable to working out the somewhat troublesome scheduling difficulties that accompany this program, there was a good deal of conflict to overcome in the early phases. The enthusiasm expressed by our staff over the success of this program was not universally demonstrated in the initial Freshmen Focus planning stages. Dedicated staff members who believe in and are willing to fight for this plan was a necessary commodity from inception through implementation.

Overall the Freshmen Focus program has been a success at Rim of the World High School. It continues to be evaluated and refined on a regular basis. As with any program there are valuable strides to be made through systematic assessment and evaluation. The counseling staff reports an increase in the number of ninth grade students able to complete their freshman year and move on successfully to the tenth grade. Academically, staff has noticed an increase in student achievement. The administration is pleased with the program and the positive impact that it has had on students at RHS. The teachers involved in the program find it a rewarding way to work with students but the real winners in this program appear to be the ninth grade students. Not only do the grades

and attendance numbers validate the program, but the students themselves feel a direct benefit from being a member of the Freshmen Focus team. "[The Freshmen Focus program] taught me responsibility that can be of use throughout my years both in high school and [in] the real world."

APPENDIX A: Comparing and Contrasting Unit

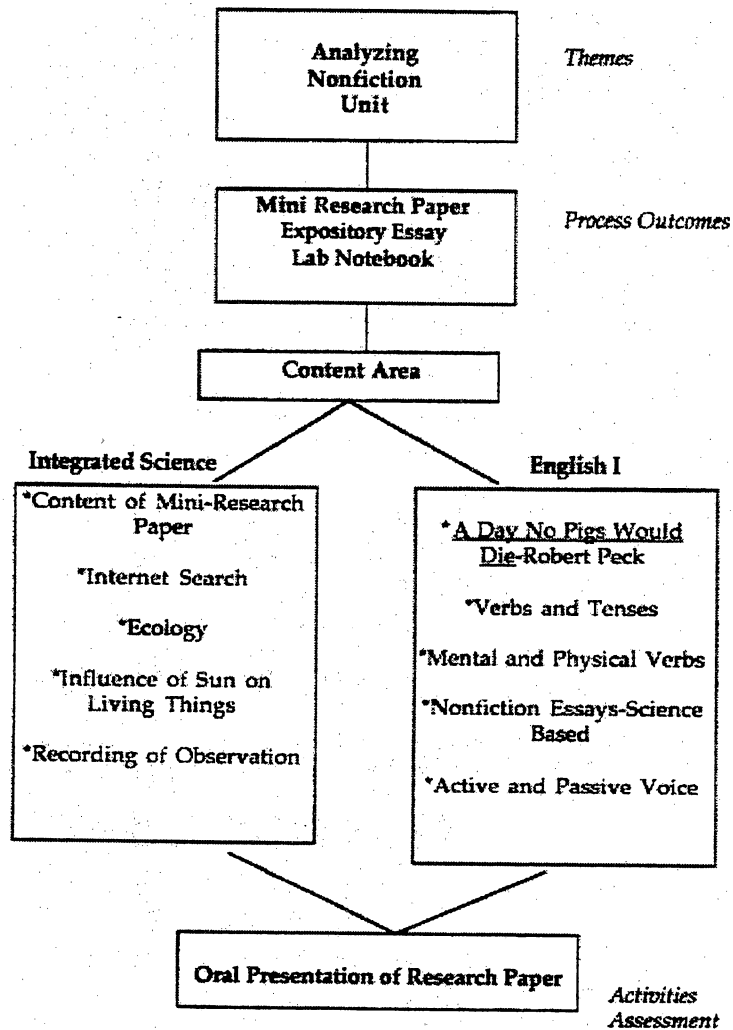
**Curriculum Development  
Integrated Science/English I**





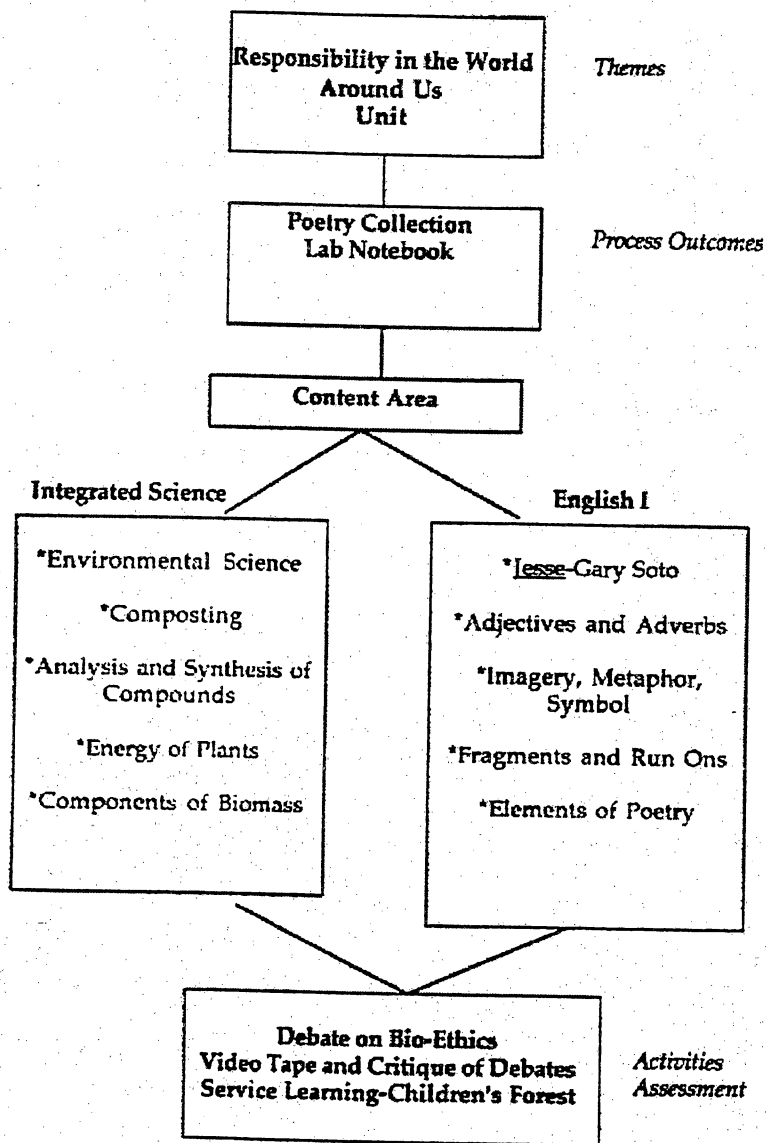
## APPENDIX B: Analyzing Nonfiction Unit

### Curriculum Development Integrated Science/English I



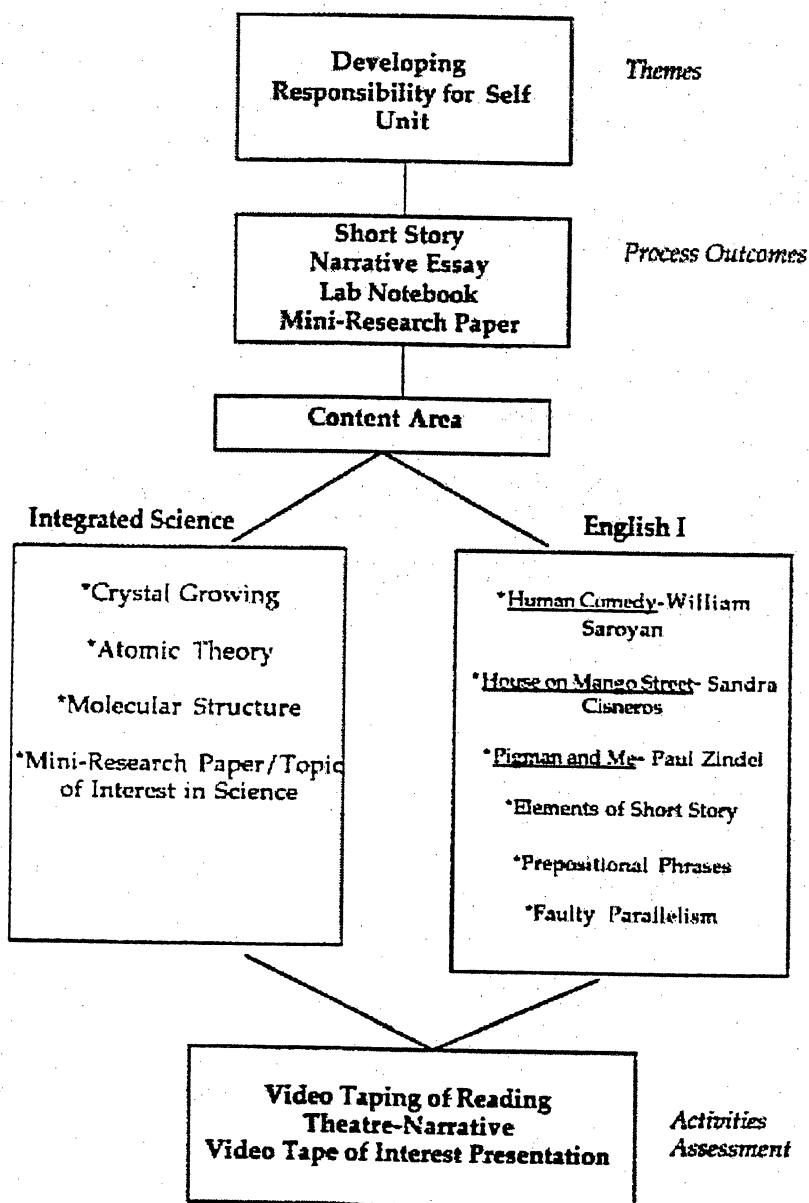
APPENDIX C: Responsibility in the World Around Us Unit

**Curriculum Development  
Integrated Science/English I**



APPENDIX D: Developing Responsibility for Self Unit

## Curriculum Development Integrated Science/English I



APPENDIX E: Teacher Constructed Instrument

Former Student Questionnaire

In response to the following questions please reflect on your participation in the Rim High School Freshmen Focus Program.

- 1] By sharing two teachers with the same classroom requirements I had a good understanding of what was expected of me. True/False
- 2] Expectations, consequences and rewards were clearly defined. True/False
- 3] I enjoyed the change of pace and creative activities that the block scheduling offered me. True/False
- 4] For me, learning was easier because of the additional time block scheduling offered me on assignments. True/False
- 5] The transition from middle school to high school was made smoother by my participation in the Freshmen Focus Program. True/False

Please respond to the following questions in writing:

Some of the most helpful aspects of the Freshmen Focus Program were.....

What I liked best about the Freshmen Focus Program was.....

How was your success in high school enhanced by being in the Freshmen Focus Program?

In what ways were you successful this year in either English or Science?

APPENDIX F: Bialer/Rotter Table

Freshmen Focus Assessment  
Locus of Control Data

Bialer Cromwell	
Control	Treatment
10	12
11	13
11	13
12	13
13	13
13	13
13	14
14	14
14	14
14	14
14	14
14	14
15	15
15	15
15	16
15	16
16	16
16	16
16	17
16	17
16	17
17	18
18	18
18	18
18	18
19	18
20	19
21	20
	20

n = 28	n = 29
mean = 15.14	mean = 15.69
sd = 2.69	

Rotter	
Control	Treatment
10	4
10	7
11	8
11	8
11	8
11	9
11	10
11	10
12	11
12	11
12	11
13	12
13	13
13	13
13	13
13	14
14	14
14	15
14	15
14	15
14	16
14	16
15	17
16	17
17	17
18	18
18	18
20	18
	19

n = 28	n = 29
mean = 13.39	mean = 13
sd = 2.55	

<b>KEY</b>	n = number in group	numbers = raw scores
	sd = standard deviation	

APPENDIX G: Administrative Evaluation English I

RIM OF THE WORLD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

EVALUATEE'S NAME: Catherine Obregon

GRADE LEVEL AND/OR ASSIGNMENT: English I (Frosh Focus)

DATE OF OBSERVATION: 1/8/98 LENGTH OF OBSERVATION: 50 minutes

EVALUATOR'S COMMENTS:

Lesson well planned and posted on the board (see handout #1). Students began the day's activities by completing a video write-up (handout #2). The day's lesson also included a review of final exam questions, a check of review questions, and the beginning of a writing project.

At 7:14 the teacher began the review of questions to be presented on the final exam. Students were on task and well engaged in the activity. The teacher is energetic and presents the material in an entertaining and effective manner. This teacher clearly demands excellent performance from her students, and they appear to respond to her challenge. This phase of the lesson ended at 7:27 a.m.

Since this class participates in the Frosh Focus program, the lesson references quotes by Dr. Jonas Salk, whose research work is being studied by Mrs. Schonert's Integrated Life Science class. Mrs. Obregon and Mrs. Schonert effectively coordinate their two classes re. subject matter and form. The teacher handed out a scoring guide and noted that most students had received either a "basic" or "limited" writing score. The teacher then gave individual assistance to students whose writing samples were in the weaker categories.

Students began their writing projects at 7:38 a.m. The teacher conducted a Q/A session utilizing Dr. Salk's quotations posted on the board. Excellent interaction between the class members and the teacher, again frequently referring to the parallel work being covered in Mrs. Schonert's ILS class. Schonert and Obregon are an effective team. The teacher explained a 3-minute speech the students will be required to present as part of Mrs. Schonert's class.

At 7:49 a.m. the students began working on their writing projects individually. Excellent lesson!

Walt D. Adams 1/8/98  
EVALUATOR'S SIGNATURE DATE

Catherine Audran Obregon 1/8/98  
EVALUATEE'S SIGNATURE DATE

EVALUATEE'S COMMENTS:

NOTE: Copy to Evaluator (pink); Evaluatee (yellow); Personnel (white)

APPENDIX H: Administrative Evaluation ILS I

**Rim of the World High School**  
Evaluation Summary

Evaluatee's Name: Laurie Schonert  
Assignment: Science Instructor  
Employment Status: Tenure  
School: Rim of the World High School

Summary of Progress Toward Goals and Objectives:

Mrs. Schonert is an innovative and energetic teacher who effectively uses multiple strategies to assess differences in academic learning through her participation in the Freshman Focus program. She also uses alternate routes if retention or advancement is needed, based upon principles abstracted from current lessons. She makes a conscious commitment to experiment and alter identified resources that may be needed for future Freshman Focus activities. She demonstrates new behaviors and strategies, as needed, in both English and Science blocks.

These methods mentioned are currently in place due to her success in the Freshman Focus program where ninth grade students are able to block integrated Lab Science I and English I. Students are able master subject content, retain information and evaluate tasks due to Mrs. Schonert's clear and efficient communication skills which allow her students to maintain attention and fully participate in all activities.

Summary of the Performance of Professional Responsibilities:

Mrs. Schonert has set an example of excellence district-wide relative to her teaching performance. She is recognized for her expert knowledge in science and is known as a highly energetic visionary. She engages in conversations about teaching and participates in faculty and district committees for the purpose of planning, implementation and support of programs in curricular and federal/state grant options. She also engages in peer support systems where she mentors, teaches and evaluates co-teachers. She has been recognized for promoting academic rigor and showing a marked increase in academic achievement in Freshman Focus student performance.

Evaluator's Signature: *Nicholas L. Wogatzke*  
Position: *Assistant Principal*  
Date: *5-1-98*

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