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## **Methods for Encouraging Economic Diversity in Academically Rigorous Courses**

Karen Patricia Kraabel

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Graduate Studies

Final Examination of

Karen Patricia Kraabel

B.A., University of Washington, 1991

for the Degree of

Master of Education

Master Teacher

Committee in Charge

Dr. Steven Schmitz

Dr. Steven Nourse Dr. Donald Woodcock

Central Washington University Des Moines Campus

Room 109

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## ABSTRACT

### METHODS FOR ENCOURAGING ECONOMIC DIVERSITY IN ACADEMICALLY RIGOROUS COURSES

by

Karen Patricia Kraabel

May 2010

In International Baccalaureate (IB) classes at Thomas Jefferson High School, the economic status of students in honors classes does not reflect that of the school as a whole. The author sought ways to bring more students from impoverished backgrounds into rigorous courses. In this school, there is a strong coincidence between ethnic minority status and socioeconomic status. The author believed that in addressing the economic issue the ethnicity issue would also be addressed. This is a practical issue as well as a pedagogical one, because the school's scores on state-wide standardized tests are lower for economically disadvantaged students than for the overall student body. Research is available on helping students from impoverished backgrounds to achieve in school. This project compiled a body of research that will help teachers at Thomas Jefferson to address the needs of economically disadvantaged students.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Educators frequently find themselves wondering why some students are successful in certain programs offered by public schools, while other students are unsuccessful or do not become involved in these programs at all. U.S. public schools face a problem in that their most challenging academic courses are not serving all students equally. Students from homes with low socioeconomic status are less likely than students from more affluent homes to participate in, or even have access to, challenging academic courses, and to find success in those courses. In fact, according to Margaret Spellings, Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education, “too few high schools – especially those serving low-income and minority populations – offer challenging courses” (WestEd, 2007). It is important to provide academic rigor to students in an equitable way. Even in schools where challenging classes are offered, efforts at making advanced classes more widely available are hampered by obstacles including the reluctance of low-income students to sign up for these classes (McNeil, 2007). Educators need to find ways to serve all students equally in academically rigorous classes in order to provide the same level of education to all.

The purpose of this project was to increase the number of students from impoverished homes being served in the challenging academic courses of the target school. The short-term goal was to encourage teachers to use particular methods and strategies which have been found by educational researchers to be successful with students from low-income backgrounds enrolled in challenging classes. The long-term goal was to bring up the number of students from low-income homes enrolled in the most challenging academic courses so that the population in these courses would reflect the population of the school as a whole. By using methods and strategies

determined to be effective with these students, the author hoped to make progress toward the long-term goal.

### Statement of Problem

The economic status of students in honors classes does not reflect that of the schools where the classes are offered. Students from impoverished home may not be receiving adequate services in academically challenging courses. While this issue has been noted in public schools throughout the United States, the author was specifically interested in the International Baccalaureate (IB) classes at Thomas Jefferson High School in the Federal Way School District in Washington State.

This was a practical issue because WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) scores were lower for economically disadvantaged students than for more affluent students. Educators were concerned that they might not be giving all students the same opportunities for success. This brought up practical issues of how they could be assured that all students were being treated equally.

### Scope

The focus of this project was to increase the number of low-income students in the most challenging academic courses. This project contains a number of methods and strategies designed to assist teachers in providing challenging curriculum to students whose needs had not previously been met by traditional teaching methods and strategies.

## Limitations

While there are many variables by which school districts identify students statistically, and variables other than income may also offer information about serving all students equally, the author chose to work only with the variable of income as it could be assessed using the rates of eligibility for the free and reduced-price lunch program. Other categories, such as race and gender, were eliminated as variables because they were not easily tracked and led to imprecision in the study, or because of the wide scope that would be necessary to study them. Additionally, providing improved service was more likely to be possible with only one variable. In the target school, more students belonging to ethnic minority groups than students from the ethnic majority were in the category of recipients of free or reduced-price meals. Due to this overlap, efforts to serve one statistical group more equitably were likely to affect other statistical groups as well.

This study was limited to students eligible for enrollment in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program, which begins in sixth grade. This limitation means that the information provided by this project may not be applicable to students below sixth grade.

## Definitions of Terms

**Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID):** a support program for categories of high school students who have not historically been successful with traditional teaching methods (Black, Little, McCoach, Purcell, & Siegle, 2008).

**International Baccalaureate (IB):** an academic system designed to provide a wide variety of students with high quality education across the curriculum (“Academic Programmes,” 2009).

**Middle Years Programme (MYP):** one of three programmes included in the International

Baccalaureate system, MYP is concerned with the education of students in grades six through ten and prepares these students for participation in the Diploma Programme, which serves students in grades eleven and twelve (“Academic Programmes,” 2009).

**Thomas Jefferson High School:** a public high school in the Federal Way School District in Washington State. (“Thomas Jefferson,” 2010).



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Educational research shows us that while all students should be given access to challenging courses, not all students get the opportunity. The literature examined here offers reasons for providing access to rigorous academic courses to all students, as well as outlining methods for increasing the success of all students in these courses. The author will discuss first the need for unlimited access to challenging courses, then the limits on access and means of increasing access. This will be followed by methods for improving the success rates of impoverished students in advanced courses, including a brief description of some strategies from available programs that are likely to prove useful in the target school.

#### All Need Access

All students should be given full access to the most challenging classes available in their schools and encouragement to stay in those courses through their high school careers. Studies show that the strongest predictor that a student will graduate from college is the level of rigor and challenge in the high school courses he has taken. Gose (1999), in a study of college graduates, tells us that this factor is more important than either class rank or standardized test scores. Educators have a responsibility to encourage all students to take the most rigorous courses available to them, and a responsibility to provide support for those students when they accept this challenge.

Some believe that only students who are already showing high ability can be helped by challenging courses. However, a longitudinal study of academic tracking by Nyberg, McMillin, O'Neill-Rood and Florence (1997) tells us that all students should be enrolled in college-

preparatory courses. Even students who have scored in the average to below-average range on standardized tests see a direct benefit from participating in rigorous courses. No student should be denied access to classes which take him beyond his accepted range of challenge.

This is supported by Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, and Callahan's (2007) article on creating positive learning environments for at-risk students. These researchers were interested in learning how modification of instruction and curriculum could help low-income and ethnic minority students to benefit from the most rigorous academic courses offered by their schools. In a qualitative study of three separate high schools that were attempting to provide more academic rigor to their low-income and ethnic minority students, Kyburg et al. describe a variety of methods teachers and school districts can use to improve students' positive experience as well as their level of education. When students see themselves as belonging in challenging classes despite the social factors that tell them otherwise, those students become more capable of doing the work we set before them.

Students from impoverished backgrounds are hampered both by education inadequate as a foundation to higher-level learning, and by social systems that leave them unprepared to navigate the pathways to post-secondary education. These obstacles include lack of study skills, fear of not being able to meet mainstream expectations, and lack of knowledge about how to apply for colleges and financial aid. Teachers in public schools can address these issues, if they first encourage students to enroll in the most challenging classes and then help those students to meet the challenge. Kyburg et al. offer a variety of methods by which to do just that. Some are meant to bring more children into challenging courses, while others are designed to provide extra support for those children once they are enrolled. They state that teachers can increase students' belief in their ability to succeed by providing extra scaffolding and various forms of support.

The methods are as simple as providing more “wait time” in classroom discussions or as complex as changing our expectations of students’ abilities. Additional wait time allows a wider variety of students to participate in class, and teachers’ belief in the ability of students leads directly to the students’ academic success. While they are at the extremes of complexity, both of these strategies, and many others, can be used to help at-risk students find success (Kyburg et al., 2007). Educators need to utilize strategies such as these.

There have been questions about the benefit to low-income students of taking rigorous academic courses. One answer is found in Gordon’s (1994) article on the reasons for low numbers of minority students becoming teachers. Gordon found that when students from certain groups, such as impoverished students, do not have access to challenging courses, they are unable to graduate from college and pursue the careers of their choice. Another author, Kahlenberg (2006), writes about the issue of segregation by income rather than race. His work shows that impoverished students benefit from inclusion in a middle-class school environment, and that economic desegregation helps at-risk students to succeed. Vang (2005) gave us an article on finding success for at-risk students. His findings show that all children, regardless of wealth, should have the same opportunities for education. Gordon, Kahlenberg, and Vang all show direct benefits to students from enrollment in challenging courses when that enrollment is combined with the support of educational strategies.

#### Not All Have Access

Unfortunately, there are barriers keeping some students from accessing rigorous and challenging courses. These obstacles include poverty, tracking, and entrance exams for students who want to take advanced classes. Schools offer various levels of difficulty, yet many students who wish to take more difficult classes are prevented from doing so by the perceived barrier of

socioeconomic status. According to Palardy and Rumberger (2005) in their article on the impact of segregation in schools, this exclusion leads to a serious effect on student achievement in high school. Students who do not take rigorous classes do not receive the full benefit of education that is available to their age-mates, even in the same schools. It is up to educators to make sure that students from all socioeconomic levels are enrolled in challenging courses.

While teachers tell all high school students that post-secondary education is likely to be important for future careers, Gordon found that the lack of money and the lack of access to challenging classes leave impoverished students feeling discouraged from attending college, either because they cannot afford it or because they are placed in tracks which lead to low-paying careers. We can help our students to see themselves as potential college students by enrolling all in the rigorous courses that will lead them to success in college, and by helping them to reach their potential within those classes.

In an article on the barriers to education, Schnaiberg (1998) reports that a lack of access to rigorous courses exists throughout our public school system, especially for students living in poverty. For various reasons, some groups of students are less likely to take rigorous courses or to stay in them once enrolled. The lack of access to such courses can prevent students from meeting their potential. While it may seem at first glance that schools offer the same benefits to all of their students, the article "AP and IB Programs" (2006) shows that students from low-income homes are less likely than their more affluent peers to be offered AP or IB classes. When students are not given the opportunity to excel, they are unfairly denied the opportunity to continue their education. The article "Working Class 'Aspiration Gap'" (2009) found that low economic status of a student's family had an impact on the student's level of success in school, going so far as to suggest that low socioeconomic status may prevent a student from reaching his

potential. It is up to educators to combat this impact by ensuring that all students are provided an equally high level of education.

This idea is more fully explained by researchers who have conducted multi-faceted experiments on people impacted by social expectations related to their income. In an article entitled "Social Class is Dead. Long Live Social Class," Spencer and Castano (2007) explain the concept of "stereotype threat." They describe the phenomenon as the experience of people who fear confirming negative stereotypes about groups to which they belong. This fear leads to lower performance on standardized tests and other measures of achievement. Americans in general demonstrate negative stereotyping of poor people as unintelligent or unwilling to work. Low-income students typically conceal their socioeconomic status because of these stereotypes and so are doubly impacted by stereotype threat when they are required to reveal financial information to qualify for fee waivers on standardized tests. The effect is that impoverished students are held back from their full potential in school settings, both by the expectations of those around them and by their own fear of fulfilling those expectations. Students from low-income homes do not receive the education to which they are entitled, because their knowledge of the social stigma of poverty prevents them from accepting the challenge of rigorous courses. Those courses would help them to be admitted to and to succeed in college, thereby beginning to break the cycle of poverty.

#### Tracking Should Be Eliminated

One of the most obvious barriers to access is academic tracking. According to Smith-Maddox and Wheelock (1995), in their article subtitled "Closing the Gap between Aspirations and Expectations," the elimination of tracking will promote belonging, increase expectations for all, and provide equitable access. Tracking denies this equitable access to advanced programs.

Nor are Smith-Maddox and Wheelock alone in their opposition to tracking. A decade later, the situation had not changed. Vang (2005) tells us that tracking creates and continues the achievement gap between rich and poor. Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, and Moeller (2009) determined that enrollment in IB or AP courses made a significant difference in the variety of colleges to which students were admitted, especially when those students were the first members of their families to attend college. Students who have been denied these courses are therefore denied access to many colleges that would otherwise offer them admission. This leads to the continuation of the educational gap between rich and poor, giving the lie to the idea that students are given equal opportunity regardless of wealth.

Some would say that de-tracking cannot be done in large school districts with a wide range of income levels. However, Burris and Welner (2005) showed the success of a suburban school system in offering high-track curriculum to all students. Their article, "Closing the Achievement Gap by Detracking," tells us that even the most capable students from low-income homes have only half the chance of enrolling in rigorous courses that their more affluent peers have. They conducted a multi-year study of a school district that eliminated low-track classes entirely and provided all students with the curriculum that had previously been given only to high-track students. The district offered extra support classes as well as monitoring the success of students who had been struggling in the low-track classes. After beginning with a system that kept low-track classes for a few students who received special education services or who were new to the school, the district discovered that students in these low-track classes tended to exhibit more behavior problems than average and to be unsuccessful academically. Soon, the low-track classes were eliminated entirely, with all students grouped heterogeneously in high-track classes. The result of this change was that students of all levels showed increased

academic success, as measured by the results of the New York Regents Exam. This included students of all races and from both low-income and high-income homes. Burris and Welner determined from this study that providing the opportunity to take advanced courses leads to higher achievement, and that denying this opportunity leads to the denial of achievement.

In American schools, tracking is a common practice despite the research that shows it is not the best situation for any of our students. Burris, Wiley, Welner, and Murphy (2008) were involved in another project, which studied academic tracking. This study, spelled out in “Accountability, Rigor, and De-tracking,” tells us that neither high- nor low-tracked students benefit from the practice. Tracking tends to put low-income students in lower tracks and cement their place in lower levels of education. De-tracking, along with high expectations for all students, leads to greater achievement by low-income students, even when the high track is a rigorous program such as IB. A study by Hertberg-Davis, Callahan, and Kyburg (2006) also tells us that de-tracking raises the challenge level for all students, and teachers and schools should make a priority of achieving equity in IB classes. Clearly, providing the most challenging courses to all students will help to bring struggling students up to their potential.

#### Strategies and Methods Are Available to Help

Many strategies available to teachers have been shown to help underserved students to be more successful in advanced courses. Complete educational programs have been developed using these strategies. Two such programs are Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IB/MYP). Both of these programs are available in the target school.

There are questions about why some students choose not to enroll in challenging courses or enroll and then drop out. Some of the answers may lie in the traditional teaching methods

often used in these classes. In studies of students who dropped out of AP and IB classes, Hertberg-Davis et al. found that the students felt that the way these courses were taught did not match the students' preferred learning styles, nor did they make the students feel welcome or successful. Providing students with access was not enough, if teachers did not utilize particular methods and strategies for promoting the success of a wider variety of students. Some programs, such as AVID and IB, are designed to benefit a wide variety of students, regardless of their measured ability. AVID requires each of its students to take at least one higher-level academic course (Black, Little, McCoach, Purcell, and Siegle, 2008) and IB classes are by definition more challenging than the typical high school or middle school class ("Academic Programmes," 2010). Each of these programs offers a variety of strategies and methods to assist students in challenging academic courses.

#### AVID Methods Can Help

Swanson founded the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program in order to provide all students with the support they need to be successful in rigorous academic courses. In "Rigor With Support: Lessons From AVID," she and co-authors Marcus and Elliott (2000) describe the purposes of AVID and several ideas for providing that necessary support. AVID has been used successfully in schools across the country, and teachers can easily utilize the strategies it employs.

AVID offers a variety of methods for helping students to achieve success in challenging classes. Students are selected for the AVID program based on factors that make the student less likely to attend college, with the goal of helping him learn how to get to college and to be successful when he gets there. The main idea is to involve the entire family while teaching both writing and study skills. When families are taught how they can help their children get access to



a college education, students can change their ideas about future career options. Children who would not have considered college without the extra support offered by AVID often go on to become successful college students and to enter professional occupations (Swanson et al,2000).

Most AVID schools limit their program to the students selected for risk factors, because the AVID program requires students to take an elective course for four years where they learn some of the skills necessary for success in challenging courses. Fitting this elective into a student's schedule can be quite difficult, depending on state and district requirements. When a school is beginning the AVID program, it is important to scaffold new coursework and training for the teachers involved. As the program becomes more established, teachers from all disciplines are trained to use AVID methods, with the long-term goal of having all teachers in the school fluent in the vocabulary and methods that help students in the AVID program to be successful (Swanson et al, 2000).

Some schools have taken on the task of providing AVID support to all students, with the result that the majority of students graduating from those high schools go on to attend college and complete degrees. By training all teachers at a particular school in the methods and strategies of AVID, and by expanding the program to include all incoming students, a school would ensure that in the course of four years all students could be enrolled in the program. It is expensive, however, to train teachers for the AVID program, and many schools are reluctant or simply unable to adjust their overall schedule to incorporate AVID for all students. Rather than take on a complete overhaul of the school's master schedule, training in methods and strategies can be offered as a part of the school's regular professional development. Teachers can be trained to use these methods in all of their classes, thereby making all students more eligible for challenging classes and admission to college (Swanson et al, 2000).

### IB/MYP Methods Can Help

IB is another program designed to challenge students so that the education they receive in middle school and high school prepares them fully for success in college. According to the information on the International Baccalaureate Organization's website, IB was created out of a need for consistently rigorous college-preparatory courses for the children of diplomats who traveled extensively and sometimes had difficulty finding appropriate schools. IB encourages students to become citizens of the world, complete with an appreciation of different values worldwide. Its academic focus is on learning the skills necessary to analyze major concepts, including both arts and sciences ("Academic Programmes," 2010).

IB is divided into three distinct programs, according to the age of the students involved. The Primary Years Program is for children through the equivalent of the U.S. public schools' fifth grade, the Middle Years Program covers grades six through ten, and the Diploma Program includes grades eleven and twelve ("Academic Programmes," 2010).

Most schools with IB programs limit enrollment to students who pass entrance exams or have high grade point averages. In his analysis of how IB works with a wide variety of students, Conner (2008) tells us that if IB is to succeed in teaching students the main ideas on which it is based, it is important that IB courses be available to all students rather than to a select few. The principles of IB require that it be offered to all students equitably. Schools with IB programs need to provide access to these courses to all of their students. This is supported by Cech (2007), who writes, in "With World Growing Smaller, IB Gets Big," that IB wants schools to eliminate entrance exams which tend to screen out low-income students. Focus should be on Title I schools, and the recommendation is to include all students in the school in the IB program. IB

wants to increase the number of poverty-stricken students who have access to its programs. The idea here is that a good education is equally valuable to all children.

As seen in the research cited above, it is important for all students to have access to the most rigorous and challenging courses, yet many are left out of these classes, or struggle to succeed in them. Strategies and methods offered by such programs as International Baccalaureate and Advancement Via Individual Determination provide teachers with the tools they need to make success in a demanding curriculum possible for all students, regardless of the income levels in their homes (“Academic Programmes,”2010) and (Black et al, 2008). Educators need to commit to offering the highest level of education to all students, not just to those whose families earn high incomes. By providing this, educators have the potential to close the achievement gap between impoverished students and their more affluent classmates.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES

#### Procedures

The purpose of this project was to increase the number of students from impoverished homes being served in challenging academic courses. The author examined materials from scholarly journals and other academic sources in order to compile methods and strategies designed to improve the participation and success rates of impoverished students in academically challenging courses. This was accomplished using the extensive resources available through Central Washington University's library system as well as sources found in online searches for academic information. Only sources that were endorsed by the University or by other academic institutions were included in the research.

#### Evaluation Criteria

Sources were evaluated for their usefulness to this study based on the following criteria: The information in the source was applicable to students in United States public high schools in the twenty-first century; both academically challenging courses and economic status of students were considered in the source; the strategies provided in the source were useful in improving both participation and performance among impoverished students; the strategies were easy to apply in a typical public high school setting, and so were likely to be readily accepted by teachers; and the strategies were easy to incorporate into existing practices, and so were unlikely to create a burden for the teacher.

#### Implementation

These strategies will be implemented through the required professional development activities at Thomas Jefferson High School, where the programs of both AVID (Advancement

Via Individual Determination) and IB/MYP (International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program) are in use and are being expanded to include more students. The author will present this project to the staff of Thomas Jefferson in the form of a notebook for each teacher containing reproducible copies of a variety of methods and strategies. Each teacher will be given the opportunity to select one or more strategies for use in the classroom. Each teacher is likely to recognize a strategy or method that will work in conjunction with his or her existing methods and that can be incorporated seamlessly, without requiring additional work. Individual teachers may decide to implement one or more strategies, or a department may decide to incorporate one strategy throughout the department. Teachers in all departments will be able to find methods that will work in their particular lessons. This process will be entirely voluntary, out of respect for the professionalism of the teachers involved.

In order to track the success of MYP and AVID strategies, each teacher who chooses to participate will be asked to analyze which strategy or strategies are used and the effect he or she sees on students. The teacher will then be given the opportunity to share ideas on the effectiveness of the method with other teachers. This can be done in writing or in conversation, and again will be entirely voluntary. Improvement in student performance is likely to follow on the use of these strategies. Teachers who have chosen not to use these methods may choose to add them to their existing lessons after they have seen improvement in their colleagues' students. In this way, there will be natural growth of use in AVID and MYP strategies throughout the school.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROJECT

This project consisted of a compilation of strategies and methods from MYP and AVID that will be provided to teachers at the target school as a portion of their professional development activities. These strategies are designed to provide rigor and challenge to all students, regardless of socioeconomic background or academic history. They can easily be incorporated into daily lesson plans, without changing the curriculum or teaching philosophies. A few small changes in the work that is already being done can help a large number of students to be more successful. Using professional development time for this project will maximize teachers' exposure to the methods and strategies without disrupting their classroom time. The expectation is that students will be more successful based on the use of these methods. Teachers at Thomas Jefferson High School have the perfect opportunity to use the best academic practices that are included in the IB Middle Years Program and AVID. Each teacher can now take and use any of the strategies and methods presented here, with the goal of helping students from low-income homes to be successful in the challenging academic courses that will lead to their success in post-secondary education.

METHODS FOR  
ENCOURAGING ECONOMIC  
DIVERSITY IN  
ACADEMICALLY  
RIGOROUS COURSES

Thomas Jefferson High School

Karen Kraabel

May 2010

## Getting Past the Scary Part

“I’m not smart enough for this stuff!”

“I’m not an honors student!”

“I’m not supposed to be in this class!”

Many of the students who will be in our IB classes in the fall because of new district policies have never even considered taking rigorous courses before. They will feel frightened and inadequate in the beginning, and we must find ways to welcome them to our classes, support them along the way, and maintain the high standards of the IB Program to which we are committed. My hope is that this collection of assignments will help us to meet all of these demands, while making the lives of teachers and students alike a little less stressful and a lot more fun.

Please browse through this booklet and discuss it with other teachers. This is just a sampling of the ideas available to all of us through the IB Online Curriculum Centre and the AVID teachers on our campus. If you have any questions, I will be glad to share with you, and I hope you will share your ideas with me. This book is designed to be a growing and changing tool, rather than a fixed document. Start here, and have fun with it. After all, this is an adventure for all of us.

If we are successful in using these strategies, by the end of the first semester we should be hearing:

“I didn’t know I could do this!”

“You mean this is honors work?”

and

“I’m glad they put me in this class!”

We will be past the scary part, and on to the big adventure of including all of our students in IB classes.



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## **Organizational and Study Skills**

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

## Color-Marking a Poem

This is an easy way to get to know a poem. All you really need for this is a copy of the poem and a handful of colored pens, pencils, or markers.

1. While looking at the poem, listen to someone reading it aloud. Choose a color, and mark any words that seem important to you. You may choose to underline, circle, or whatever.
2. When you have heard the entire poem, turn the paper over, and on the back of the page, using the color you marked with, write, “This poem is about...” and finish the sentence.
3. Repeat step 1. Choose a different color for the second reading.
4. Repeat step 2. You may find that your answer is different this time. That’s okay. See if you can go deeper into the meaning of the poem this time.
5. Repeat step 1. Choose another color for this third reading.
6. Repeat step 2. Your answer may be different this time, too. That’s okay. You may be able to go still deeper into the meaning, or you may feel that you have already gone far enough. If that is the case, it’s okay to say something very like one of your previous answers.
7. Looking over the three sentences you wrote starting with “This poem is about...” decide what you think this poem is really about. You may think it is completely surface-level, or you may see something beyond that. As long as it fits the text and context of the poem, your answer will be fine. Write your conclusion after the other three sentences.
8. Now look at the poem more closely. Look for words that fit together somehow, by referring to the same topic or connecting in another way, and draw lines between them. For instance, if the word “morning” is in one part of the poem, and “sunrise,” or “noontime,” or “darkness” is in another part, you could draw a line from “morning” and

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

connect it to the other word. This will show you some of the ways the author has played with language to make his point.

9. Find any examples of metaphor and underline them with a distinct color. (Feel free to use your vocabulary notes if you aren't sure exactly what this is).
10. Choose a different color and underline any similes.
11. Circle any examples of imagery.
12. Draw a rectangle around any alliteration.
13. Put a star next to any other literary device that you recognize.
14. On the back of your paper, write "This poet uses the literary device of \_\_\_\_\_ to show that \_\_\_\_\_ is like \_\_\_\_\_." **OR** write "This poet uses the literary device of \_\_\_\_\_ to show the idea of \_\_\_\_\_." Fill in the blanks.
15. One more time, write "This poem is about...." and finish the sentence. This may be exactly like one of your previous sentences, or something entirely new. Again, as long as it fits the text and context, it will be fine.

Congratulations! You have just analyzed a poem. You have decided what the poem means, and you have identified some of the literary devices the poet used to make it mean that. This is what poetry analysis is all about. You will be able to use these skills on any poem you see in the future.

## Marking a Book Without Leaving a Mark

If you have developed a habit of marking books to record your thoughts as you read, or to highlight the most important passages, or to remind yourself to look up a word, this assignment will help you to do so in a new way. If you have never marked a book before, you may be surprised to find a teacher suggesting that you write in a book. This particular technique is designed to help you use your book to its full potential, while leaving it clean and ready for the next reader.

There are many good reasons for making notes in books, but it is not always possible for a reader to purchase every book he needs. For this reason, I suggest that you use post-it notes or similar removable tags to make your notes. You will be able to use a book supplied by the school and get the same benefit from it that you would if you purchased the book.

Your assignment:

Working with the supplies provided by your teacher, gather a selection of removable tags in various colors. Choose a color for new vocabulary, a color for pointing out main ideas, a color for literary devices, etc. Start with as many different colors as you can, and at least a dozen notes in each of those colors.

Start reading the new text. When you find a word that is new to you, or that seems to be used differently than you have seen it used before, mark the page with your vocabulary color. At this point, you may choose to stop and find the best definition for the word, or you may wish to continue reading and come back later to add the definition. Either way, put the definition directly on the post-it, so when you see it again you will know what the word means.

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

When you notice an idea that seems like it might be important, mark it with your “important ideas” color, and write a note to yourself on the post-it about that idea. If you start to notice one idea coming up again and again, you may decide that you need a separate color for that idea. The beauty of temporary marking is that you can easily change to a new color if you need to.

Do the same for literary devices such as metaphors, similes, imagery, connotative words, etc. As you read, you will likely find a variety of things to mark. Mark anything that seems important. Remember, you can remove the notes if you change your mind.

When you have finished the first chapter or significant section of the text, look back over your work. You will notice colored tags sticking out from many pages. Look back over your notes and determine how you wish to use them. Create a legend for your notes.

Here comes the part you turn in:

Write a paragraph explaining how you used your post-it notes and how you plan to use them for the rest of the text. Be sure to attach a legend of your colors. When you turn in this assignment, show your marked book to your teacher.

Congratulations! You have now successfully marked one section of a novel, and when you turn back your book at the end of the unit, another student will be able to do the same. Consider yourself a master recycler/reuser.

## Composition Book Assignments

Your composition book is a place for you to record your thoughts as you read. You will need to designate different sections of the book for assignments, personal responses, powerful quotes, and vocabulary.

### *Wandering Star* Composition Book Assignment #1:

In pages 3-13, the narrator describes a number of situations that leave the main character with a sense that something bad is about to happen. Choose one of those situations and explain how the text leads to that sense of foreboding.

### *Wandering Star* Composition Book Assignment #2:

The first chapter is full of imagery related to sound. After a careful reading, decide what songs you would use to create a soundtrack for the chapter. Be sure to include a separate piece of music for each separate event, with a minimum of 8 pieces for the chapter. Explain why you have chosen each piece.

For a teensy bit of extra credit, find a way to present your soundtrack audibly to the class. This could be a CD, a video, or an I-Pod collection.

Composition Book entries are graded according to the attached rubric. Be ready to show:

1. In-depth understanding of the text,
2. Clear evidence of independent and original perspectives,
3. Persuasive presentation with accurate and well-chosen examples, and
4. Clear expression of ideas through an effective choice of register with crystal-clear evidence of proofreading.

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

## Pre-Reading and Reading Strategies

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB



### **One-to-Two Page Historical /Geographical/Cultural Research**

As you begin reading *Wandering Star*, you will probably find yourself trying to figure out what is going on around the characters. In order to make this easier, you will be doing a very brief research project on either the history or the geography and culture of the setting of this novel. I will assign you to one of the two topics, and you will work in a small group to get the necessary information.

When you have completed your research, write it up in paragraph form. Be sure you have answered all of the questions listed, as thoroughly as you can within one to two pages. Your sources will be listed on a separate "Works Cited" page at the end of your work. Use MLA format for your work.

#### **History groups:**

Please consult 4-6 sources, including at least one online source and at least one book source, to discover what you need to know about the setting. This story begins in the France/Italy border area near Saint Martin, in the summer of 1943. It ends in Nice, France, in 1982, with stops along the way in Israel, Palestine, and Canada. You will need to answer the following questions about France, Italy, Israel, and Palestine in the years 1943 to 1950.

1. What major world conflict is underway?
2. What are the relations between France and Italy?
3. Who is in power in each country?
4. How has that power been established?
5. How does Germany play into this situation?

#### **Geography/ Culture groups:**

Please consult 4-6 sources, including at least one online source and at least one book source, to discover what you need to know about the setting. This story begins in the France/Italy border area near Saint Martin, in the summer of 1943. It ends in Nice, France, in 1982, with stops along the way in Israel, Palestine, and Canada. You will need to answer the following questions about France, Italy, Israel, and Palestine in the years 1943 to 1950.

1. What is the geographical terrain of each of these countries, especially in the border areas?
2. What are the most common crops and foods in each area?
3. What languages are spoken?
4. What religions are represented?
5. How does religion play into this situation?

### Chronological Chart of Events in Text

As you read *Wandering Star*, you may find yourself trying to keep a track of dates and places. Make it easier on yourself by writing these things down as you come to them. This is a fairly simple exercise that can make understanding the novel much easier.

Create a T-chart for the main character, with concrete details, including page numbers, on the left and a brief explanation on the right. In that box on the right, be sure to include a reference to the season and year as well as the place where the event takes place.

If you decide that another character is likely to be important, you can easily start a chart for that character as well. As long as you write things down as you read, you will not be confused.

When you have finished reading the novel, draw a timeline. Use a different color of ink for each of the main characters you have chosen, and include all of the events you thought were important. You will now have a single visual organizer to show you what is going on in the text. Don't lose the T-chart, though, as it is likely to help you with your reading log, as well.

## Recognizing Satire

In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, you will encounter many instances of satire. If you are unable to recognize them, you will not understand the main points of the novel. This assignment will help you to understand what you are reading.

### Huck Finn Composition Book Assignment One

In your composition book, set aside at least 2 pages and label them “Satire.” You will start with a definition, and use the next page or two to expand on your understanding of the term.

Write the following definition of *satire* in your composition book:

Satire: when human folly and vice are held up to scorn, derision, or ridicule often through the use of irony, sarcasm, or ridicule

Folly: state or quality of being foolish

Vice: immoral or evil habit or practice; fault, defect, shortcoming

Scorn: disdain or contempt

After your two pages for satire, set aside five or six pages and label them *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Now, look at the first seven paragraphs of Huck Finn. These paragraphs immediately reveal some important things about Huck and Twain. Unlike Saturday Night Live, that spoofs or satirizes using look-alikes (Tina Fey as Sarah Palin), Twain often satirizes human folly and foibles discreetly – one reason this book is often banned. If read at face value, a reader might not get Twain’s barbs. See if you do.

Read each paragraph and see if you can identify what Twain may be poking fun at. List them in your composition book by paragraph and then identify what you believe Twain is satirizing.

## How To Do A “One-Pager”

A “One-Pager” is a way to express your understanding of a piece of literature, most often a poem. The goal is to create a unique and colorful visual representation of the poem that effectively fills the entire page.

On the front of your paper, include the following:

Two pictures you draw yourself that represent what you think the poem is about.

(Don’t forget to make them colorful)

Two quotes from the poem.

(Use quotation marks at the beginning and end of each)

Two interpretive statements about the poem.

(“I think this means...” or “I think this is about...”)

One question you have about the poem.

(“I wonder...” or “I wish I knew...”)

On the back of your paper, include the following:

Two statements explaining why you chose the pictures.

Two statements explaining why you chose the quotes.

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

## Reading Log

### *Wandering Star*

By J.M.G. LeClezio

Translated by C. Dickson

*Wandering Star* begins in 1943 in the border area of France and Italy. Its protagonist is a teenaged girl who describes the events of her life as they unfold. This complicated setting is made more complicated by what is happening in her family. You will do well to do some historical, cultural, and geographical research before you read, and to take good notes as you go.

If you have not read a book in translation before, you may find some things a bit confusing. Translated works often contain minor grammatical errors or words used differently than they usually are used. Please keep this in mind as you read, so the translation doesn't stand in the way of your full understanding of the text.

Your reading log will be four pages of single-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font, addressing the topics listed on this page. Your MLA format heading will be on a separate title page, so you have four full pages to use. If you find it necessary to go onto a fifth page, it should be in order to complete a thought that is well worth including.

Topics to address:

- Imagery (What is the impact of LeClezio's extensive use of imagery?)
- The use of multiple names for a single character
- The relationship between Esther and Nejma
- The use of similar passages in different parts of the text
- Changing narration from 3<sup>rd</sup> person to 1<sup>st</sup> person and back
- Changing narration from past tense to present tense and back
- Secrets
- Escape
- Prayer

Retells without an investigation of text for meaning. 1

Summarizes text for meaning but little or no analysis. Does not address literary techniques or effects. 2

Analyzes main ideas and addresses requirements of log assignment. Supporting quotations come from beginning, middle, and end of text. Some attempts at addressing literary techniques and the effects. 3

Analyzes main ideas and addresses requirements of log assignment. Supporting quotations come from beginning, middle, and end of text. Addresses literary techniques and their effects with appreciation 4

## Reduction

### Reduction of *Wandering Star*

A reduction is a means of finding the essence of a novel. When you can say what a book is truly “about,” you have a stronger ability to write clearly about that book. The reduction is an organizational tool which can help you to interact with a work in a personal way, to gain a deeper understanding, and to see patterns in the work that you might not have noticed. While you will be using this technique to compare books next semester, this first reduction is based on just one book.

Your reduction will be a group effort and include information you determine is needed to fully understand the work. At its simplest, a reduction can be thought of as a collection of important facts and insights about the work, as seen by the individual reader. A group reduction combines those ideas from each member of the group, and the group decides which ideas are most important.

Each reduction will be created on a single horizontal sheet of butcher paper. You may organize information on the page in whatever way makes sense to you. Dashes, bullets, arrows, boxes, brackets, underlining, and shading are all common ways to highlight items and make connections. The format is creative and self-determined, but the choosing of the elements is enriched by many sources, including reading, class discussion, comparing notes, writing, and conferring in pairs and small groups.

Reductions are a way to help you make more sense of the work and to review and remember more about it. Scour your logs and the notes in your books for important details or observations you might want to include. For example, you might include a phrase that suggests foreshadowing; a note about objects that seem or are symbolic; a list of adjectives frequently used to describe a certain character; an observation about setting; quotations that seem crucial to understanding; motifs, and so on. Any details that seem important to understanding the work are appropriate.

The format for the reduction is your group’s decision. Some of you may wish to organize notes by chapters or parts, trace patterns or paths throughout the book, and make charts with areas for themes. I will bring in examples of individual book reductions the seniors have done to give you inspiration, but you must promise not to take too many ideas from them. Last year, I used examples from a book that focused on family relationships, and most of the juniors used trees on their posters although the books they wrote about did not have that focus. Watch out for that sort of influence.

The reduction is obviously not meant to represent all that your group knows about the work. Each item is meant to be a link, a spark that elicits a further chain of thought.

Your group reduction must include ideas from all of your group members, together on one poster. Color and pictures almost always add to the clarity of the work. You will not be graded on the quality of your artwork, but rather on the effective use of the space.

### Reduction Rubric

Reduction Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_

7 – Excellent Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth understanding of the text</li> <li>• Clear evidence of independent and/or original perspectives</li> <li>• Persuasive presentation with accurate and well-chosen examples</li> <li>• Insightful expression of ideas</li> <li>• Enthusiastic embracing of the “spirit of the assignment”</li> </ul>
6 --Very Good Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very good understanding of the text</li> <li>• Mostly independent and/or original perspectives</li> <li>• Persuasive presentation with some accurate and effective examples</li> <li>• Thoughtful reduction that indicates the “spirit of the assignment”</li> </ul>
5 -- Good Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good understanding of the text</li> <li>• Adequate evidence of thought about the text</li> <li>• A consistently relevant reduction of the text</li> <li>• Good expression of relevant ideas</li> </ul>
4 – Satisfactory Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate understanding of the text (few errors in representation)</li> <li>• Few, if any, indications of original perspectives</li> <li>• Some evidence of logic, some relevant examples used</li> <li>• Expression of ideas is generally accurate and effective, but not particularly insightful or enriching</li> </ul>
3—Mediocre Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some understanding of the text – suggests text was not read in full</li> <li>• Few, if any, indications of independent thought</li> <li>• Spotty relevance of ideas</li> <li>• Reduction suggests a last-minute attempt to get something on paper (that which is done without effort is received without pleasure)</li> </ul>
2 – Poor Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic understanding of the text</li> <li>• Ideas represented mainly consist of the obvious and narration of plot or paraphrase of content</li> <li>• Poorly conceived and unclear ideas</li> <li>• Reduction suggests a last-minute attempt for points</li> </ul>
1 – Very Poor Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicates no understanding of the text</li> <li>• Ideas are mainly irrelevant or incorrect</li> <li>• No evidence of structure to support ideas</li> <li>• Little suggestion of thought or effort</li> </ul>

Comments:

Total \_\_\_\_\_

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## Writing

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB



## Assessment Circles

Assessment Circles are writing and editing groups. You will be in a group of four and on the assigned date, you will provide **four copies** of a **complete, typed draft** of your paper—complete with a word count (1000-1500 words). I will provide rubrics for everyone. You will work off of one copy and each member of your group will also be given a copy. It will be your and your group members' responsibility to edit and proofread the papers. This is practice for the world literature essays, which can have very little feedback from the teacher.

This is how the Assessment Circle works:

Choose a person to begin. Everyone reads that person's paper. The readers will use the backs of the rubrics to make notes of points to be addressed for the writer. It is also okay to write directly on the paper you are assessing, but I will not be looking there when I grade your contributions. When the paper has been considered, each reader will take turns telling the writer what worked or what did not work. **It is expected that there are thoughtful and insightful notes on the backs of the rubrics and that each person has something to say to the writer. An "I thought it was good" is not insightful or thoughtful.**

The writer listens to each member of the group, but does not ask questions or apologize or defend during the feedback period. When all have finished, then the writer may ask questions for clarification. All of the rubrics, assessed, with notes on back are then given to the writer.

And the process begins again until everyone in the group has had feedback.

You will be assessed on your preparation and contribution to the Assessment Circle. The grading rubric is on the back of this paper. Be sure to turn it in, and to indicate who was in your group.

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### Grading Scale

Does student come to class prepared with a copy of paper for all members of group including herself? 0 3 (all or nothing)

Are drafts complete (1000-1500 words), typed in 12 point serif font, double spaced, with an MLA heading and running header? 0 3 (all or nothing)

Did student provide thoughtful and insightful written feedback on back of rubric for each Assessment Circle member? 0 1 2 3 4

Are rubrics assessed, reflecting evaluator was conscientious, thoughtful, and met “the spirit of the task”? 0 1 2 3 4

This is an Odds and Ends assignment.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0-2	3	4-5	6-7	8-9	10-11	12-13	14

## Commentary Checklist

(These are common commentary issues—avoid by checking list)

- ❑ MLA heading (check with your teacher to get the correct class number), running header, double spacing, 12 point serif font are expected. If you choose to “stylize” your commentary, then expect to get no higher than a **1 in Presentation**.
- ❑ Indicate two complementary tones in the introduction. Do not use the word tone. If you do not want to irritate your teacher, you will use a variety of words throughout your essay rather than repeating the same words. One example of an irritating opening (and how **not** to write your introduction) is: “LeClezio uses two complementary tones, the tone of peace and the tone of desperation, thus dividing the passage into two different styles.” ISH!
- ❑ Use three diction quotes (1-2 words each) in your first CD sentence. Do the same thing for your second CD sentence.
- ❑ Rather than listing diction quotes, integrate them into complete sentences that provide context.
- ❑ Tense—write about literature in present tense.
- ❑ Use two imagery quotes in each of your imagery CD sentences.
- ❑ As with diction, integrate the imagery quotes into complete sentences that provide context.
- ❑ Have agreement in number of antecedent and pronoun. For example, *J.M.G. LeClezio* as an antecedent needs a singular pronoun *he*. Please note, I used italics because when you write about a word as a word (and not just quoted text), you italicize the word.
- ❑ Do not use *you* or *I*, heaven forbid. While you’re at it, watch out for any form of *you* or *yours*.
- ❑ It’s/its—*it’s* is a contraction and **we do not use contractions in formal writing**. *Its* is the possessive form of *it*.
- ❑ Periods and commas go **INSIDE** quotation marks.
- ❑ Do not use *starts off* when *begins* is only one word and correct; do not use *gives off* but rather *conveys*. There is no place for casual language in formal writing.
- ❑ Do not repeat over and over and over again
- ❑ Use an apostrophe when a word is possessive. For example, “...leaped out at the boy’s hand” because the hand belongs to the boy. However, if the word is plural, you add an apostrophe and an s—as in *men’s*, *children’s*. But if the word ends in *s*, but is not plural, add the *s* and apostrophe—Mrs. Jones’s pen. However, do not add an apostrophe to make a word plural.
- ❑ Concluding sentences must not just restate TS or what the paragraph just established. Make the CS sentence more commentary
- ❑ Absolutely no “filler and fluff” sentences like “The first section starts at the beginning...” Also, do not use F & F sentences to teach that “diction is the author’s choice of words,” or “imagery is used by the author to paint a picture in the reader’s mind.” The first example is stating the obvious, the second is cliché. You need all of your words to show your ideas, not to fill space.
- ❑ The author and the narrator are not necessarily the same. So LeClezio wrote *Wandering Star* but he may not be the narrator.
- ❑ Commentary has an original **title** that hints at what is in the paper—do not under pain of literary death or public humiliation, title your commentary *Wandering Star*, or Commentary on *Wandering Star*, or Commentary.
- ❑ Eliminate “the reader.” “In this passage from Shakespeare’s play *The Taming of the Shrew*, diction, imagery, and organization convey to the reader a feeling of sympathy for Petruchio.” The same idea can be achieved with the following sentence: “In this passage from Shakespeare’s play *The Taming of the Shrew*, diction, imagery, and organization convey a feeling of sympathy for Petruchio.” Ta da, no “the reader.”

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

## How to Write a Comparison Paper

In IB, you will be asked to write two types of papers: written commentaries and comparative studies. Comparative studies are often referred to as comparison papers. In a comparative study you will, as the title implies, compare two works of literature.

Your job is to find a relevant link between the two works in order to explore the similarities and differences. You will focus on one aspect of the two works, such as narrative technique, characterization, common themes, conflicts and resolutions, literary devices, historical context, social context, or any other literary aspect that presents itself to your imagination and can be supported with text and context. Be sure to deal with the different cultural expectations of each novel, so you will avoid calling something universal that is really “American” or “western” in nature. You will need a brief introduction and a brief conclusion. The majority of your work will be the direct comparison between the two works, presented as a reasoned argument with textual evidence.

Once you have identified a topic for comparison, you will want to consider the following:

- The context and structure of each text
- The literary aspects that helped you to see these two works as worthy of comparison
- The use of literary devices and their effects
- The meaning, idea, or theme of each work that strikes you as comparable
- The different ways you can analyze the two texts

You are not required to use any particular one of these, though they are presented here because they are likely to lead you to success in this venture. You are required to connect the two works with some form of literary analysis, and to do so in a formal piece of writing which meets the expectations of formal literary criticism. Use your IB rubric as a guide while you write.

Everything you have done in IB and pre-IB has been intended to help you at this time, so use what you have learned to your benefit. In addition to contributing to your first semester grade, the comparison papers and written commentaries will serve as practice for the World Literature papers you write in second semester and which will be sent to IB for external assessment. By using the written work in first semester to refine your technique, you have the potential to increase your scores on the World Literature papers. In other words, give it your very best effort and the rewards will follow.

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

### *Wandering Star* In-Class Commentary

Your commentary assignment for *Wandering Star* is to write the introduction and imagery paragraph for one of the passages I've given you. Refer to the handouts you were given for "The Rattler" and use them to guide your paragraph; also, use the feedback you were given on your previous commentaries. Remember, your topic sentence should establish T (Technique) + I (Idea/Author's Intent) = E (Effect on the Reader).

You may work in groups of four. You will have one long day to write the commentary during class; then, have someone (or perhaps more than one "someone" to ensure that the job gets done!) type it up in perfect MLA format. Your typed copy, with all of your names attached, is due on Friday.

#### Passage # 1

"Esther was thinking about freedom. *Giustizia e Libertà*. Brao said that they were up there on the top of that mountain. That they met near the chapel. Maybe she could speak with them, maybe they knew something, had news from Saint-Martin. Maybe she could go away with them, cross the mountains and she would find Tristan and Rachel and Judith and all the people in the village again, the old men muffled up in their caftans and the women wearing their long dresses and scarves over their hair. There would be children too, all the children running around the fountain in the square, or bounding down the long street with the stream all the way to the grassy field by the river. But she didn't want to think about all of that. She wanted to go farther than that, take the train to Paris, go out to the ocean, to Brittany maybe. Before, she often used to talk about Brittany with her father, he'd promised to take her there. That was why she was climbing this mountain, to be free, to stop thinking. When she found the people from *Giustizia e Libertà*, she wouldn't have to think about anything anymore, everything would be different."

#### Passage #2

"A little before noon, Esther reached the sanctuary. The chapel was deserted, the door locked, some of the windowpanes were broken. In the entryway there were the remnants of a fire. Someone had eaten there, maybe spent the night. A few bits of cardboard, some dried twigs were left. Esther climbed up to the fountain above the sanctuary and drank the ice-cold water.

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

Then she sat down to wait. Her heart was beating fast.... Everything was so silent, only the light sound of the wind in the larches, but gradually Esther made out other sounds, cracking sounds in the rocks, rustling sounds in the brush, or else the brief passage of an insect, the distant cry of a bird in the undergrowth. The sky was very blue, cloudless, the sun burned down. “

### Passage # 3

“That’s how the days passed from sunrise to sunset with nothing but the steady sound of the river, Loula’s cries and tears, the soft bleating of the goat and her kid. Saadi called Nejma “my wife,” and it made her laugh. Most of all, she loved evening time, when everything was finished. Saadi turned toward the night for God’s call, then he went to sit down beside Nejma and they talked while Loula fell asleep. It was as if no one else were alive in the world, as if they were the first, or the last, it was the same thing. Bats appeared in the gray sky and took their turn at skimming over the deep pool of water, hunting mosquitoes. Saadi and Nejma drank the still-warm goat’s milk, took turns dipping their lips into the metal plate. The stars shown before them in the cleft in the hills, the cold night wind began making its sound in the tamarisk leaves.”

## Timed Writing

This is a 3-part process designed to help you practice writing to a prompt in a limited amount of time. It will prepare you for your IB exams, when you will be asked to complete a similar task and will have no access to written materials. We will do this assignment on three separate long days, with a different prompt each time. The prompts are taken from those used on previous years' IB exams, to give you a sense of the type of question you will be asked.

**Part One:** Using your composition book, your reading log, and the book itself, write to the prompt you have been assigned. You will be writing a multi-paragraph essay (4-6 paragraphs, including introduction) in response to the given question. You must finish this essay in class today and have it stamped. Take it home and type it up exactly as you wrote it in class, with the exception that you may use spell-check. Other than spelling, do not add, subtract, or change anything in your paper.

**Part Two:** Using your composition book and reading log, but not the book itself, write to the prompt you have been assigned. You will be writing a multi-paragraph essay (4-6 paragraphs, including introduction) in response to the given question. You must finish this essay in class today and have it stamped. Take it home and type it up exactly as you wrote it in class, with the exception that you may use spell-check. Other than spelling, do not add, subtract, or change anything in your paper.

**Part Three:** Using only your composition book, write to the prompt you have been assigned. You will be writing a multi-paragraph essay (4-6 paragraphs, including introduction) in response to the given question. You must finish this essay in class today and have it stamped. Take it home and type it up exactly as you wrote it in class, with the exception that you may use spell-check. Other than spelling, do not add, subtract, or change anything in your paper.

## **Oral Presentations and Discussions**

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB



## **How to Do An Oral Presentation for IB**

The individual oral presentation, done in the first semester of junior year, is the first of two required oral activities in IB. The second is based on a passage selected at random from what you have studied in senior year. This first one is based on a passage that you select with your teacher's help from work that you study in this semester.

You will have learned how to write a commentary before you are asked to do one aloud. The same skills are used in the oral commentary, and this time spelling doesn't count.

### **Choosing a topic**

You want to choose your passage based on your ability to demonstrate your understanding of the novel. Pick a passage where you can clearly see the techniques, ideas, and effects in the writing. Choose one from a book that you really "get." You will need to talk for 10-15 minutes about the passage, so find one with plenty of literary devices. Go over the grading rubric so you will know exactly what is expected of you, and choose a passage that will help you earn a high score.

### **Preparing to speak in front of the class**

Many people are fearful of public speaking. Even if you are one of those people right now, you don't have to continue as such. We will do small presentations throughout the semester, which will help you to feel more comfortable in front of the class. Remember, too, that all of your classmates are in the same position you are in, and they want you to be successful almost as much as you do. The first time is the scariest, and after that it gets easier each time. It's okay to look just over the heads of your audience instead of directly at them. The best preparation is to practice speaking to groups of people, as often as possible. Here are some ideas for getting started:

Ask for your family's attention at the dinner table

Ask them to watch while you stand in front of the television and tell them about your day

Request an audience of your friends at lunchtime and tell them a story

Participate in an assembly where you don't speak but are in front of a crowd

Ask a few of your classmates to listen to you speaking about a novel, then make the group bigger until you are speaking to the whole class

Participate in every whole-class discussion in every class

## Grading

Your oral commentary is a chance for you to demonstrate what you know. The categories to be graded are:

**Knowledge and Understanding of the Extract or Work:** A high-scoring presentation shows excellent understanding and thorough knowledge of the work, including a precise knowledge of the appropriate context of the extract.

**Interpretation and Personal Response:** A high-scoring presentation shows excellent interpretation of the work, convincing and detailed interpretation of the thought and feeling including a fully considered and independent critical response, excellent awareness and critical analysis of the effects of the literary features, and a full support with precise references to the extract or work.

**Presentation:** A high-scoring presentation shows a clearly focused, well-developed and persuasive response with purposeful and effective structure. The response is focused, coherent, and presented in a very effective and persuasive manner. Supporting references to the extract are well integrated into the body of the response.

**Use of Language:** A high-scoring presentation uses clear, varied, precise and concise language. There are no significant lapses in grammar and expression. There is an effective choice of register and style. The presentation demonstrates precise use of wide vocabulary and varied grammar structures, and literary terms are used appropriately.

## Oral Presentations – The 5-Minute Version

Like the official oral presentation for IB, this shorter version is about demonstrating your understanding of a text. This one is designed as practice for the longer one you will do later.

You will be asked to choose a passage from a chapter selected by your teacher. You will have about a week to prepare, and, if possible, you will have time in class to work on what you want to say in your commentary. This commentary is just like the written ones you did at the start of the semester, but if you try to write it all out you will find that the spoken version sounds stilted and awkward. Instead, highlight your passage for diction, imagery, and organization, then write an outline that will serve as your speaking notes. You will have the highlighted passage and your outline with you at the front of the class when you present.

While you may be afraid of speaking in front of the class, this exercise will help you to get over that fear. On your instructions for the 10-15 minute presentation, you will find hints on how to become accustomed to public speaking. Start using them now, so you can eliminate nervousness from what you think about as you present. It's nice to be able to just stand in front of class and tell us what you think about the book, rather than focusing on your nerves.

### Grading

Your oral commentary is a chance for you to demonstrate what you know. The categories to be graded are:

**Knowledge and Understanding of the Extract or Work:** A high-scoring presentation shows excellent understanding and thorough knowledge of the work, including a precise knowledge of the appropriate context of the extract.

**Interpretation and Personal Response:** A high-scoring presentation shows excellent interpretation of the work, convincing and detailed interpretation of the thought and feeling including a fully considered and independent critical response, excellent awareness and critical analysis of the effects of the literary features, and a full support with precise references to the extract or work.

**Presentation:** A high-scoring presentation shows a clearly focused, well-developed and persuasive response with purposeful and effective structure. The response is focused, coherent, and presented in a very effective and persuasive manner. Supporting references to the extract are well integrated into the body of the response.

**Use of Language:** A high-scoring presentation uses clear, varied, precise and concise language. There are no significant lapses in grammar and expression. There is an effective choice of register and style. The presentation demonstrates precise use of wide vocabulary and varied grammar structures, and literary terms are used appropriately.

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

## Potential Pitfalls of Oral Presentations (and How to Prevent Them)

Having graded hundreds of oral presentations, I have compiled here a list of problems that occur frequently and keep students from the highest scores. They range from the extreme low end of each category to nearly acceptable. Many presentations are just below the average range in a particular category, and can be improved by minor adjustments or some extra attention to one area. Everything you improve increases your score, so you will get the highest score possible for your work.

### Knowledge / Understanding of Extract or Work(s)

1. Has characters or situations confused. Refers to incorrect information.
2. Doesn't give evidence that student understands the passage.
3. Doesn't place the passage in context or mentions the context but only briefly.
4. Has incorrect placement in context. Seems to have read only this section or not to understand how the passage fits in the work as a whole.

To Save Yourself: Read the book carefully, then go over your notes and assignments related to the book. If you have the option of choosing your own passage, find one that you feel certain you understand completely. If you are assigned a passage, go over it carefully until you know exactly what you think about it.

### Interpretation and Personal Response

1. Doesn't mention effects on reader, or briefly touches on them. Be sure to explicitly establish who is speaking in your passage and how that person feels about the situation. That will establish the tones. For example, in *The Rattler*, the speaker feels reluctant to kill the snake yet obligated to do so. This establishes two complementary tones of reluctance and obligation. What does the author feel is important about what is happening in your passage? What techniques has he used to show you this? At the same time, you want to avoid using the word *tone* or the phrase *the reader* in your presentation.
2. Effects of passage are mentioned but it is not clear which techniques and language/ideas led to these effects.
3. Techniques are incorrectly identified.
4. Techniques are mentioned but are not clearly linked to language/ideas and effects.
5. There is no personal response to the extract. Any other student could have made exactly the same presentation. Nothing makes it unique to this student.
6. Interpretation seems to show misunderstanding of the passage.
7. References don't seem to back up what the student is saying.
8. References are vague.
9. There is little or nothing original about the presentation.

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

10. There is little or no evidence of critical thinking.

**To Save Yourself:** Pay close attention to how the author has achieved the two complementary tones. Know the definitions of any techniques you might use, so you will use them correctly. Show exactly how the technique links to the idea and the effect. Make it clear that you, the individual, have considered what's going on in the passage and that you have ideas about it.

### **Presentation**

1. Presentation is under 10 minutes or over 15 minutes in length. Time must be in the 10-15 minute range in order to receive a score higher than 3 for the presentation category.
2. Lacks structure. It is unclear where the presentation is going.
3. References are not clearly integrated into the presentation.
4. References do not appropriately and effectively support the student's ideas.
5. Ideas presented are not convincing.
6. Student seems unsure of which details are important.
7. Student seems unsure of how to effectively end the presentation. A good ending helps to clarify the structure and smoothly finish the presentation.
8. Student appears to be reading to the audience. This leads to a score of no more than 3 in this category.

**To Save Yourself:** Practice in front of a mirror. Time yourself. Practice making eye-contact with your audience. Write an outline of what you are going to say, including how you will integrate your references. You will have only minimal notes to work from, so it is important that you know what you want to say. Allow your notes to guide you.

### **Use of Language**

1. Uses words incorrectly.
2. Uses vague, general, or casual language. Examples of casual language are "sort of", "kind of" "you guys", etc.
3. Uses vocal place-holders, such as "um", "like", "yeah", "you know", etc. While everybody uses a few of these, more than one or two in the entire presentation will draw the listener's attention to them rather than to your work.

**To Save Yourself:** Practice in front of a mirror. When you are planning your presentation, make sure that you understand the meanings of all the words you will use, and how to pronounce them. It's better to use smaller words correctly than bigger words incorrectly. Your goal is clear communication.

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

## How to Participate in a Graded Discussion

Because the ability to discuss a novel indicates a better understanding of it, and because among the standards we are required to assess are several having to do with oral presentations and discussions, we will have discussions on most, if not all, of the books we read. Keep this instruction page to use every time we have a discussion.

Please note, discussions cannot be made up. It is impossible to re-create the classroom environment where you and your classmates contribute to each other's learning. We will have several days of discussion on each book, and you will come prepared each day, so there is no reason for you not to participate.

Each day of discussion will be announced ahead of time. The discussion will be initiated and sustained by students. This will demonstrate your ability to prepare for and participate in a scholarly discussion, unaided, for the class period.

To prepare for a discussion: Complete all reading, review your logs and book notations, and do the following:

1. Think about topics that lend themselves to sustained discussion and analysis. Such topics might include
  - a. Levels of meaning in a specific passage
  - b. Events or characters of critical importance to the narrator
  - c. Recurring motifs (e.g. blindness, invisibility, identity, names)
  - d. Potent imagery
  - e. Symbols and their meaning
  
2. Craft two "claims" suitable for scholarly discussion. *Example:* "The purpose of the \_\_\_\_\_ idea in the novel so far seems to be \_\_\_\_\_."  
(You, of course, would have filled in the blank.)
  
3. In addition to two claims, craft two penetrating questions suitable for leading a community of scholars into analytical discussion. *Example:* "The author (or narrator) has brought up the idea of \_\_\_\_\_. How does this idea affect the structure of the novel?" (You, of course, also would have prepared the beginning of an answer to the question you posed and your "penetrating" question must not be a question of fact.)

Participation and assessment: The teacher will call on someone to begin with either a claim or a question (and the beginning of an answer). The group will then continue the discussion on its own. While the discussion ebbs and flows, the teacher will be listening and evaluating each speaker, using the rubric on the back side of this paper. You must speak to earn points. Everyone

The assignments presented here are adapted from the methods and strategies of AVID and IB

is expected to speak twice in the multiple day discussion. Even if you speak twice on the first day, you must be fully involved as a listener for the remaining days.

What is the quality of thinking? Does speaker avoid unnecessary repetitions? Does the speaker make specific, clear and thoughtful references to the text? Does speaker use “the obvious” to go on to deeper analysis and commentary? Does the speaker follow up on openings created by others? Is the language suitable for a community of scholars? Does the speaker control his or her use of “air time”? Is the speaker fully engaged as a listener when he or she is not speaking?

Points possible:

7 points for the multiple-day discussion, in the oral presentations and discussions category.

4 points per day of discussion, in the general assignments category. Typed claims (2 per day of discussion) and questions with the beginnings of answers (2 per day of discussion).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of Thinking: 1-2 3 4 5

Quality of Participation: 1-2 3 4 5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of Thinking: 1-2 3 4 5

Quality of Participation: 1-2 3 4 5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of Thinking: 1-2 3 4 5

Quality of Participation: 1-2 3 4 5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of Thinking: 1-2 3 4 5

Quality of Participation: 1-2 3 4 5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of Thinking: 1-2 3 4 5

Quality of Participation: 1-2 3 4 5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of Thinking: 1-2 3 4 5

Quality of Participation: 1-2 3 4 5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of Thinking: 1-2 3 4 5

Quality of Participation: 1-2 3 4 5

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Quality of Thinking: 1-2 3 4 5

Quality of Participation: 1-2 3 4 5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this project was to increase the number of students from impoverished homes being served in the most challenging academic courses. I accomplished this purpose by researching methods and strategies designed to assist students from low-income homes to be successful in challenging academic courses. I found a number of strategies that could be said to help impoverished students, whether by offering students new ways to look at their work or by encouraging teachers to provide a wider variety of assignments. While trying one or the other would make any research more valid, a dual-edged approach seemed more useful, as it would allow for the most immediate benefit to students.

As I conducted my literature review, the same ideas came up again and again. Beyond giving full access to challenging courses for all students, researchers suggested that specific methods could be used in the classroom to reach students from various backgrounds who might not otherwise find success in those courses. One of the most eye-opening works that I found was a study by Hertberg-Davis, Callahan, and Kyburg (2006). These researchers found that many students in challenging courses were dropping out of those classes because they felt that teachers were not responding to their educational needs. Students were asked to receive information in a particular way that suited their teachers, but the teachers did not consider the possibility that some students had not been taught to learn in that way. A number of students felt ignored or disrespected by teachers who were unwilling to change their methods, insisting on using the methods they had always used. These students believed that the teachers in their advanced courses were more concerned with presenting the material in a traditional manner than they were

with helping their students to connect to the material. To students, it felt as if the teachers valued and respected the intellectual material more than they did the students who were trying to learn the material.

### Conclusions

Among the many ideas I read about in my research were a number of strategies for helping students to learn in new ways, addressing multiple intelligences and varied learning styles. I had seen some of these strategies before, through my own interest in these topics and through courses that I have taken during my eighteen years of teaching. I have made real efforts to utilize my knowledge of the variety of strategies available to me as a teacher, and I was glad to find many methods and lessons I had not seen before that I could add to my repertoire. I found myself looking for ways to share this information with my colleagues in order to better serve the students in my school, especially to help students in our academically challenging courses to feel both welcome and successful. As I continued my research, I was inspired when I discovered that many of these strategies were available in programs that were already in place or about to be started in my own school. AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) has been in place at Thomas Jefferson for several years, and a number of teachers have been trained to use its methods. Thomas Jefferson has been an IB (International Baccalaureate) school for approximately ten years, and in the coming school year we will be adding the MYP (Middle Years Program) portion to our ninth and tenth grade classes.

I have been trained to work in AVID and IB, and look forward to being trained for MYP. I am already using methods from both programs. The knowledge I have acquired while doing this project can now be shared with my colleagues, at little to no additional cost to the school district. I have compiled here a variety of lesson plans, teaching strategies, and educational

methods to present to the teachers at Thomas Jefferson High School during our contractually required professional development time.

Research shows that the methods and strategies offered by AVID and IB/MYP help students from impoverished backgrounds to be successful in rigorous academic courses. Teachers at Thomas Jefferson High School have access to these methods and strategies. We are required to participate in professional development activities each school year, and the strategies listed here can easily be incorporated into those professional development activities. My experience of finding a number of these strategies and using them in the classroom leads me to believe that they are readily accessible and easy to use. The expanded use of these methods and strategies will allow our impoverished students to be more successful in academically challenging classes, thereby improving their high school education and opening doors to post-secondary education. We should act quickly to implement AVID and IB/MYP strategies in our classrooms.

#### Recommendations

As we bring the IB Middle Years Program (IB/MYP) into our school, we are in a strong position to improve academic success for all of our students. Over the next three to five years, all of our potential students will be introduced to the Middle Years Program (MYP) in their current middle schools. Eventually all of our ninth and tenth grade courses will be aligned with the requirements of MYP. All departments will be involved, including physical education and elective courses that have traditionally been exempt from such alignment. The objectives for IB/MYP include competence in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting information in the language of instruction of the school. These skills are clearly needed in all disciplines. At the Online Curriculum Centre, provided by IB to assist teachers, Thomas

Jefferson teachers will find not only strategies which develop these skills, but also lesson plans for their particular subject areas. IB teachers have had access to these best practices since the beginning of our Diploma Program, and now they are available to all teachers at Thomas Jefferson.

Along with IB/MYP strategies, we have access to the strategies and techniques developed for the AVID program. Many Thomas Jefferson teachers have been using AVID techniques in their classrooms since the inception of the AVID program at Thomas Jefferson. Now we have the opportunity to use both sets of practices to help a wider range of students than those who are in IB Diploma Program or AVID classes.

Certain strategies offered by the AVID and MYP programs have been shown to help impoverished children to perform better in rigorous academic courses. While children from low-income homes seem to need these strategies to be successful, children from more affluent homes also benefit from them. This project is a compilation of some of those strategies that can easily be used by teachers at Thomas Jefferson High School to serve all of our students, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

I recommend that these strategies and methods be presented to teachers as part of our contractually required professional development activities. Their use should be entirely voluntary, as our teachers have already demonstrated their tireless efforts to help students in every way possible. The teachers' commitment to the success of our students is clear, and their dedication to continuous improvement should be acknowledged. Requiring the use of these methods might seem to be more efficient, but it does not recognize the professionalism that our teachers are demonstrating.

Previously, a number of the ideas presented at our professional development sessions have been ineffective. Some were designed for use by elementary school teachers, some implied or even directly stated that our students' success was dependent on our teachers working harder or caring more about students, and some which might have been useful were presented briefly and never revisited. A much better use of our professional development time is to introduce and implement access to the methods and strategies of two proven and accessible programs. These two programs are expected to help teachers at Thomas Jefferson to increase the academic success of most of our students. This project will be available to teachers for as long as they want it, rather than being introduced and forgotten.

Teachers in our district have been blamed for any of the variety of problems that have come up, including many that are not related to the work we do in the classroom. When teachers are told that they are not doing enough, or that their efforts are ineffective, they rightfully feel disrespected as professionals. We have seen enough blaming and need to move into the productive arena of finding solutions to the problems we have. Out of respect for the experience and devotion of our teachers, these methods should be offered for voluntary use as a means of improving upon their already strong teaching.

Each teacher is likely to recognize a strategy or method that will work with his or her existing methods and that can be incorporated seamlessly, without requiring additional work. Individual teachers can choose to implement one or more strategies, or a department can decide to incorporate one strategy throughout the department. Teachers in all departments can find methods that will work in their particular lessons.

I have used several of these methods in my classroom, with mixed results. Some strategies have worked very well, while others did not suit my material, my particular students,

or sometimes my personality. Other ideas were immediately successful in one class but not another. Because there are so many strategies from which to choose, I felt comfortable trying a variety of ideas and was not disturbed by the occasional failure. After all, in this job it is important to be flexible and ready to make a change at a moment's notice. The wealth of new ideas helped me to find new strategies to replace those that were unsuccessful. The biggest lesson I found here was that when I am selecting from a large number of teacher-tested ideas, it is important to imagine each strategy with a particular class, choose one to try, and be ready with variations on that idea in case it does not go as planned.

A strategy in the Organization and Study Skills section that I have found effective is Cornell Note-taking. Thomas Jefferson teachers were introduced to this technique as part of a staff development activity a few years ago, and it is now in use in classrooms across the school. This is helping students to better understand their textbooks and other materials that can be difficult to access. It encourages students to identify the most important parts of the text and to summarize those parts, allowing for more efficient studying. One problem I have encountered with Cornell notes, however, is that students sometimes get so focused on the procedure for taking notes that they neglect the material itself. I have seen cases where a student has beautifully constructed notes and summaries, yet cannot tell me what he has just written about.

Another strategy that I have used many times is the One-Pager, which can be found in the Reading and Pre-Reading Strategies. This assignment asks students to consider the imagery in a text, and to draw what they imagine to be happening in the scene. This is then supported by direct quotations from the text, explanations of their importance, and questions the students still have about the text. While its practicality in a literature class is clear, a colleague in the history department recently used this to help students dig deeper into a historical document, and found

that students were better able to articulate their understanding than when they worked without the One-Pager. Since many students have seen the assignment in English classes, recognizing its requirements made using this method easier for students and helped them to see that the same skills can be used in multiple disciplines.

A method found in the Writing section that has proved effective in my classes is the reading log. This asks students to take notes as they read, preparing them to write clearly and concisely about the text. Students who do not complete the reading log often find themselves searching the text for topics to write about, while students who are consistent with their reading logs have a ready source of textual details to support their ideas. Because students sometimes have preconceived notions that reading logs are difficult and time-consuming, I sometimes break the process down into smaller parts and call it by a different name. Students are less willing to complete long assignments that require them to address each section of a book than they are to do shorter daily assignments that require the same type and amount of work.

From the Presentations and Discussions section, I frequently use the Socratic seminar method in my classes. This allows students to take charge of a discussion, keep it on track, and process what they are learning. Socratic seminars are also being used in psychology, history, and theory of knowledge courses. I have also been requiring students to come to discussions prepared with questions and comments, a strategy used in the Fishbowl Feedback activity, in order to keep discussions flowing smoothly. One thing to watch out for here is the student who does not participate in discussion and thinks his lack of participation will not be noticed, or the student who is absent on the day of a graded discussion. The first problem can be solved by the teacher prompting reluctant students to speak, and the second can be eliminated by running a discussion for several consecutive days. A student who is absent for the entire multiple-day

discussion can be excused from the assignment, and one who misses just one day can easily participate on the days that he is present.

In order to track the success of our use of MYP and AVID strategies, each teacher who chooses to participate will be asked to analyze which strategy or strategies are used and the effect he or she sees on students. The teacher will then be given the opportunity to share ideas on the effectiveness of the method with other teachers. This can be done in writing or in conversation, and again should be entirely voluntary. Any requirement to share data might be seen as a means of assessing the teacher's performance, and that could impact teachers' willingness to participate. Teacher evaluation should in no way be impacted by the teacher's choice of using these strategies.

Improvement in student performance is likely to follow on the wider use of these strategies. Teachers who have chosen not to use these strategies or methods may, in fact, choose to add them to their existing lessons in the future after they have seen improvement in their colleagues' students. Those who have utilized these ideas are likely to want even more of them, and to find them by accessing not only this collection, but also the Online Curriculum Centre and the AVID website. The future of this project for Thomas Jefferson High School will be driven by the direct needs of our teachers as they find methods that work for them individually. In this way, there will be natural growth of use in AVID and MYP strategies throughout the school. If I were to continue this project, I would ask the Federal Way School District to arrange for any teacher interested in these methods and strategies to be trained by the International Baccalaureate Organization, the AVID organization, or both. While access to the ideas is a big step in the right direction, we could gain much more by attending extensive training sessions designed to help us use the methods effectively. An alternative would be to assign a certificated teacher at each



grade level to continue research into methods designed to improve the academic success of impoverished students, and to share that information with teachers district-wide.

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