



Curriculum Committee Meeting
Wednesday, May 7, 2025
9:30 AM
Zoom Webinar

- I. Call to order
- II. Approval of April meeting minutes
- III. Academic Highlights
 - Art Jam - May 15th
 - AI Advisory Committee Progress and Supports
 - Earth Day Activities Update
 - School Climate Surveys - Families, Staff & Students (survey window May4-May31)
 - May - Jewish American Heritage Month & World Day for Cultural Diversity Day
- IV. Presentation on District Writing Curriculum
- V. Weston Connect: A Community Skills and Networking Database
- VI. Future Meeting Topics;
Academic Year in Review - scheduled for Tuesday, June 3 from 3:00-5:00 p.m.
- VII. Adjournment

Curriculum Committee Meeting

April 2, 2025 at 9:30 a.m.

Via Zoom

Present Committee Members:

David Felton (Chairperson), Lisa Luft, Chap Hoeppe

Present Administration:

Deborah Low, Acting Superintendent; Tina Henckel, Ed.D, Assistant Superintendent; Meghan Conetta, WHS Principal; Pattie Falber, WIS Principal; Penny Proskinitopoulos, WHS Assistant Principal; Teacher Venessa Eisenman; Riley Rapoport, 6-12 Math CIL; Erin Barlow, 3-5 Math CIL; Kelly DelVecchio, K-2 Math CIL

1. Call to Order

The meeting called to order at 9:31 a.m.

Discussion:

Mr. Felton reviewed the general purpose of the Curriculum Committee meeting and the virtual meeting norms.

2. Approval of March 2025 meeting minutes

Motion Passed: Move that the Curriculum Committee approve the March 2025 meeting minutes. This motion made by Chad Hoeppe and seconded by Lisa Luft

3 Yeas – 0 Nays

3. Curriculum Updates

Portrait of the Graduate

Discussion:

Venessa Eisenman and Penny Proskinitopoulos presented on the Portrait of the Graduation program:

- Students compile artifacts demonstrating their skills in six competencies: thinking critically, communicating with purpose, solving problems, expressing creativity, caring for self, and caring for others.
- Students present their portfolios to a panel of faculty and community members.
- The program is a graduation requirement.
- The panel discussions were praised for being impactful, with students expressing deep reflection on their growth and the support from teachers and the community.
- Feedback from students indicated that the portfolio accurately reflected their development, and they felt confident in their ability to present their work. Moving forward, the program will continue to seek feedback from both students and staff to improve and clarify details, such as the types of artifacts students should include.
- Next steps for the program include surveying staff and stakeholders for further improvements.

Tri-State Follow-Up Visit

Discussion:

- The Tri-State Consortium is a group of high-performing districts from Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. Weston participated in a visit in March 2023 to review their 5-12 math curriculum, resources, instruction, and evidence supporting all learners. A follow-up meeting was held on April 1 to assess progress on recommendations from the 2023 visit. The meeting involved staff and Tri-State members, with a focus on the progress made in math instruction.
- Significant progress was made in implementing recommendations, particularly in curriculum design and instruction for diverse learners, including students with disabilities and ELL (English Language Learners).
- Feedback was positive, with recognition of Weston’s leadership in math instruction.
- Some recommendations are still in progress, especially around supporting metacognition in math classrooms.
- A more detailed review of student artifacts and evidence of instructional shifts will occur during the academic year review in June.

NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) Visit

Discussion:

- A NEASC team is visiting Weston in April 2025 to review progress on previously established goals: curriculum, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), school climate, and capital planning.
- The team will assess Weston’s growth in these areas and provide recommendations for future improvements.
- The NEASC visit is part of a long-term process, culminating in a decennial visit every ten years. This particular visit follows up on the collaborative conference visit in 2023.
- Focus groups will include staff, students, and administrators, with classroom observations and feedback being key components.
- The visit aims to celebrate achievements and identify areas for further growth.
- The community will be informed about the importance of the visit, and the Board will participate in discussions with the NEASC team. Deborah Low highlighted that the NEASC visit is a significant milestone in Weston’s educational journey, underlining the prestige of the process and the importance of the upcoming report.

District Feedback on PD Your Way – March 21, 2025

Discussion:

- Dr. Henckel reviewed the most recent district professional development day “PD Your Way” where the staff had the opportunity to choose topics of interest and build their own schedule from a selection of 91 offerings.
- Themes included mathematics, literacy, science, play-based learning, culturally responsive practices, artificial intelligence in the classroom, social emotional learning, and personal wellness to name a few.
- The staff appreciate the autonomy in selecting professional development. Staff feedback was provided for each session. In general, feedback was positive; learning was well received with positive energy and camaraderie.
- The PD team helped design the schedule with sessions from external presenters and staff members. This format is typically held every other year due to the large scale of planning involved.

Weston Leader and Teacher Evaluation and Support Plan Pilot

Discussion:

- The district revised its teacher and leader evaluation system last year, and this is the first year of implementation. It is still considered a "pilot" as adjustments are being made throughout the year.
- Feedback has been gathered from educators and teachers on how to improve the evaluation system, particularly in terms of providing timely, specific, and quality feedback.
- The subcommittee working on the evaluation system is evolving, and further updates on the changes will be provided. The Board will vote to finalize the system for the next school year.

4. Personal Finance Presentation

Discussion:

- The state has mandated that all students complete a half-year credit of personal finance. CIL Riley Rapoport gave an overview of the Weston Personal Finance curriculum.
- The curriculum is designed to equip students with practical financial knowledge, making them more prepared to handle financial challenges in the future.
- The course uses the "Next Generation Personal Finance" curriculum, which is the state-recommended program. It is project-based and focused on collaborative discussions, with minimal standardized testing. Students engage in reflection and apply their learning through various projects.
- Ms. Rapoport reviewed the unit on investment and the components of the final projects. She noted the unit on consumer bias, where students learn how advertising, particularly on social media, influences purchasing decisions, providing valuable insight into financial decision-making.
- The committee discussed the sustainability of other courses when faced with an unfunded mandate such as this course from the state.
- The committee acknowledged the importance of considering various learning formats for personal finance, including online options, but also emphasized the value of in-person instruction for nuanced topics like investing and credit.

5. Academic Year in Review Meeting Date Change

Discussion:

- The Committee discussed and agreed on June 3, 2025 at the date for the final Curriculum Committee meeting of the 2025-26 year. The entire Board is invited to participate in the meeting that presents the Academic Year in Review with oral presentations and displays by content area of the culmination of the curricular work for the year.

6. Future Meeting Topics

Discussion:

Dr. Henckel mentioned the following as possible topics:

- A discussion lead by curriculum leaders on the district writing program.
- Weston Connect, a community skills and networking database.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
June Curiano



District Writing Curriculum

Presented to the BOE Curriculum Subcommittee

May 7, 2025

What We Value

Our mission is to develop confident, skilled, and purposeful writers from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Rooted in the Connecticut Core Standards for English Language Arts and enriched by the values of the Weston Public Schools community, we believe writing is a vital tool for thinking, learning, and communicating. Through intentional instruction, regular and meaningful feedback, as well as diverse writing opportunities, we empower students to craft clear, compelling, and authentic writing pieces that reflect their understanding, voice, and purpose.



How We Accomplish What We Value

We ensure all writers experience:

- Student choice and voice
- Explicit teaching
- Time for writing
- Process writing
- Knowledge building
- Ongoing feedback
- Response to reading/text writing
- Portrait of The Graduate



Kinds of Writing

Common Core Standards direct what students write:

- Narrative
- Opinion/ Argument
- Text Analysis (Grades 3-12)
- Information
- Research

And how they write:

- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Craft and structure



Also..

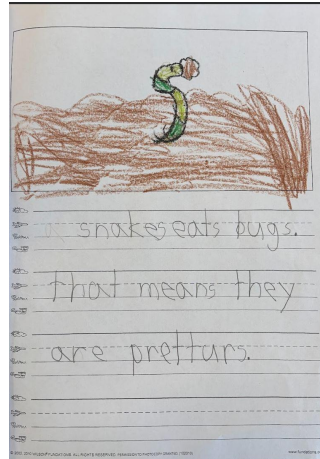
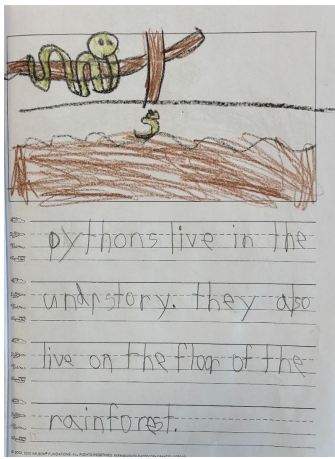
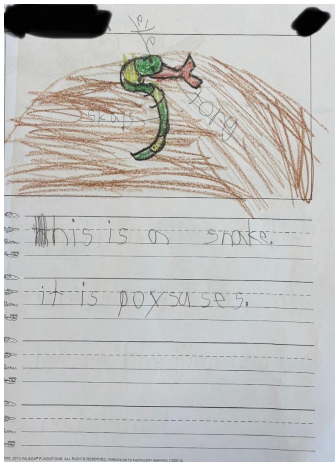
Beyond the standards, we also seek to..

- Investigate and incorporate opportunities for inter-disciplinary knowledge building
- Incorporate opportunities for students to work collaboratively
- Develop presentation skills
- Allow every student to recognize their power in communicating their interests, opinions, and passions as writers

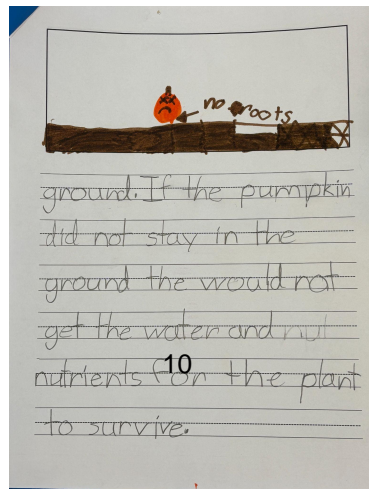
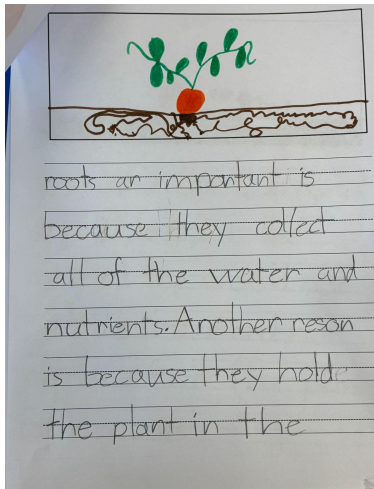
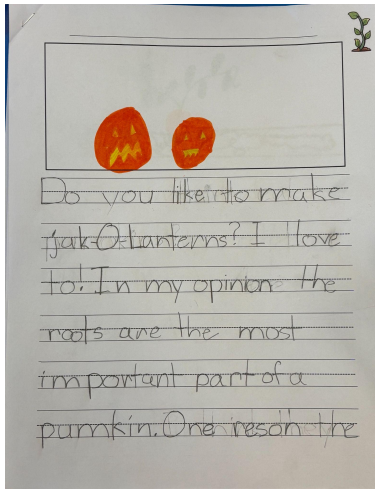


A Progression of Writing K-2

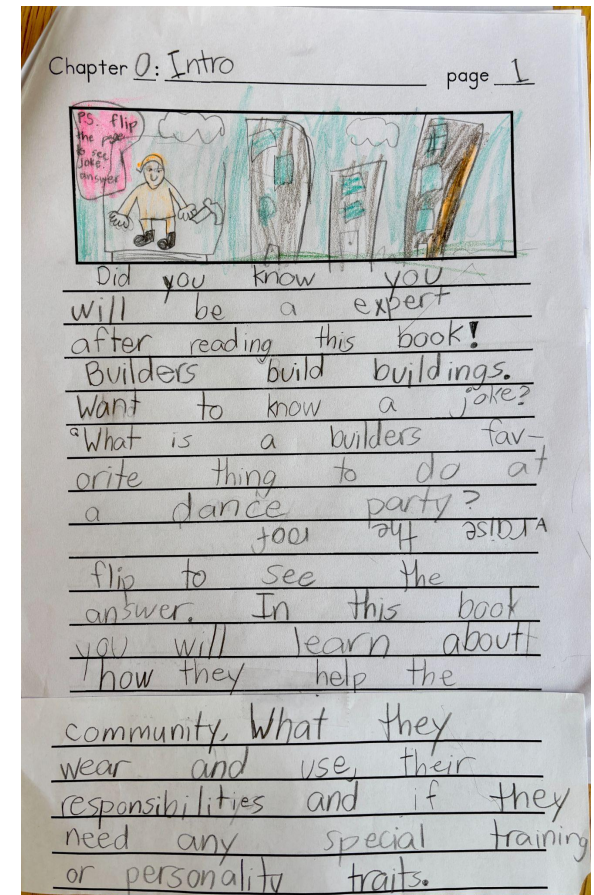
Kindergarten-Pythons



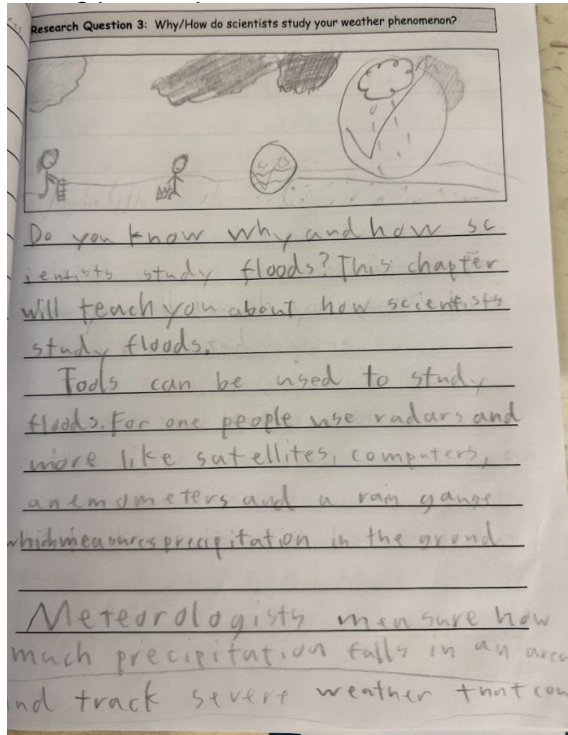
First Grade-Pumpkins



Second Grade-Intro-Builders



A Progression of Writing 3-5



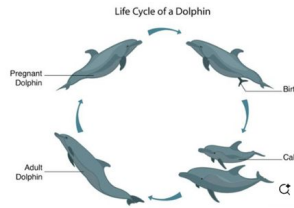
Third Grade -
Tornadoes

Round, and Round My Life

Dolphins go through several stages in their life cycle. The first cycle is the fetus. A fetus is a baby dolphin still inside their mom's stomach. The next cycle is a calf. A calf is a newborn dolphin. Next they become a young adult (also known as a teenager). And finally the adult., dolphins can live from 45-90 years.

When a dolphin is a fetus they stay inside their mother for a year. Wow, that's a long time to carry 4.3 pounds! When the baby is born it's biological name changes. It is now called a calf. Some calves stay with their mother for six years! How would you feel when you turned six and your mom kicked you out? Probably not so good. Anyway, when a dolphin baby is being born, another adult dolphin helps the mother. That dolphin is called an auntie. Directly after the dolphin is born the mother and auntie help the dolphin swim up to the ocean's surface and take it's first breaths. After it's taken it's first breaths, the calf has to learn their mother's name and create it's own. After it's done that, their mother teaches them how to catch food.

When a dolphin is a teenager they leave their mother and they start living on their own. Although, the dolphin is only a teenager for a little of their life. After a male dolphin turns 8-12 years old they start to mature. After a female dolphin turns 5-10 they will start to mature. Next, after 30 years the dolphin will turn 40 and they will become fully grown and officially a grown up. These are all the reasons why I think dolphins go through several stages in their life cycle. If you liked this section you're going to love the next!



2

Fourth Grade -
Dolphins

creatures, and food too. They get what they need to survive from the sun, water, and from photosynthesis. For example all of these producers - seagrass, seaweed, algae, and phytoplankton- all get energy from the sun. Seagrass needs clean water to survive. Algae and phytoplankton also need water to survive. Out of these four producers, seaweed is the only that doesn't need water for drinking water. Most of them get nutrients for water; phytoplankton uses photosynthesis to make sugar for nutrients instead of just using water.

Consumers

The consumers in this ecosystem are shellfish, zooplankton, starfish, sharks, killer whales, and so many other creatures. They help the ecosystems in many ways. For example they help by maintaining a healthy balance in the ocean. That's what killer whales do. Like killer whales, sharks help with the ocean's health. Shellfish help stabilize sediments. Starfish and zooplankton help energy go through the ecosystem.

These consumers get what they need to survive by adapting for what they

need. For example shellfish adapted to change

This image shows starfish in someone's palm. Starfish can be so small that they can fit in your palm!

environments. This could help shellfish get food. The food gives them energy and nutrients, which they need to survive. For shelter, shellfish live in salty or brackish coastal waters. They also need water. Starfish have adapted protective shells which provide shelter. Starfish also live in seagrass, tidal pools, rocky shores, kelp beds, and coral reefs. Their shells help starfish live in each section of the ocean. Starfish get energy and nutrients from a process called predation. Predation is when one animal kills and eats another animal. Starfish also get water from a process called, water vascular system. In this process "water enters the body through a tube in the foot grooves and via a plate called the madreporite". Smithsonian Ocean. Sharks have adapted their body shapes; their body shapes help them move fast. They also gills; the gills take the oxygen out of the water. The bodies can help them get food, which gives sharks energy and

Consumers in this ecosystem: Starfish, shellfish, zooplankton, sharks, killer whales (orcas).

3

Fifth Grade -
Oceans



A Progression of Analytical Writing ELA Grades 6-8

4. Write - Write a fully developed paragraph response to the prompt. Be sure to include quotes with page numbers to support your thinking.

What message or lesson about human nature does the author convey through the story? Provide evidence from chapters 7, 8 and 9 to support your thinking.

I think that a message about human nature that the author conveys through paragraphs 7, 8, and 9 is injustice/inequality knows no bounds. In this story, although most of the characters do so wrong they are judged harshly off of their skin color by white supremacists who call them awful names and treat them terribly.

The first piece of evidence that supports that injustice/inequality shows no bounds is when Uncle Hammer found out about what Lillian Jean had done to Cassie, mistreated her and made her apologize for Cassie's accident, however unlike the other adults he had wanted to do something about it, however he did not end up doing so. Although Big Ma and Mama knew it was unfair and unjustified that Cassie had been so brutally mistreated they also knew that they could do nothing about it since in that time period while people typically had more privilege and power therefore Mama and Big Ma knew that they were powerless to Mr Simmes (Lillian Jean's father). A quote supporting that injustice/inequality shows no bounds is "Miss Lillian Jean," page 110 chapter 7. Although this is a small quote I think that this quote represents how the adults in Cassie's life are scared to fight for their power, their freedom, and although the term "Miss Lillian Jean may seem insignificant it signifies how Cassie is fighting for her freedom, her power, by pretending to be nice, acquire her secrets, lead Jean up, and use the secrets to blackmail her. This shows that injustice/inequality shows no bounds because Cassie who is not even a teenager has had people be racist toward her, not only that but fight for what she thinks is right, showing why I think that the human nature the author conveys through paragraphs 7, 8, and 9, is that inequality/injustice shows no bounds.

The second piece of evidence that supports that injustice/inequality shows no bounds is when T.J. had something to do with the fire of Mama. T.J. because he was "fed up" with the Logans decided to get Mama fired from her job as a teacher and used Mr Granger's dislike of Mama to get her fired from her job because of Mr Granger's racism. This is shown from the quote "Ah, ma, leave me be! All y'all Logans think y'all are doggone smart with y'all's new maps and books and shiny new Puckard's" chapter 9 page 121. In this quote T.J. explains how he is finally done with the Logan family shortly after he gets Mama fired, using Mr Granger's racism against Mama, showing that injustice/inequality shows no bounds and can come from the people who you least expect it from.

The third and final piece of evidence that supports that injustice/inequality shows no bounds is when Papa had gotten shot. According to the book when Papa had been riding with Uncle Hammer in the vehicle both of his tires had fallen out because someone had sabotaged

their tires. When he had to have gotten out to fix the tires he was shot in the head. Papa believed in justice for his family and community and stood up to racism. I think that this was a message from people who didn't have the same belief that all people are equal. I think a quote that shows this is "Shawee shook his head. "I damn. His big brother got by the wagon... and he's about... " page 144 chapter 9. This quote shows the severity of his father's injuries, showing injustice/inequality knows no bounds.

What is the theme of *Touching Spirit Bear*?

Directions: For this theme essay, focus on a theme in the story and how it reveals a universal truth about humanity by using the motifs of anger, forgiveness, and healing. While you can use Cole, Peter, and other characters to demonstrate how the theme exists, make sure you don't get distracted and write a plot summary or focus only on character change without something it back to the theme. Additionally, you should use your evidence to show how that character changes over the course of the story AND how that change reflects the theme.

Expectations: This is a processed piece of writing, students are expected to engage in and leverage the entire writing process from planning and drafting to editing and revising. The essay should be **FIVE (5) well-developed paragraphs** consisting of an **introduction**, **THREE (3) body paragraphs**, and a **conclusion**. Each body paragraph should have **TWO (2) direct pieces of textual evidence**. Textual evidence must come with an MLA parenthetical citation.

Fifteen-year-old Cole Matthews didn't mean to smash Peter Driscals head against a sidewalk. But because of his anger issues, it just happened. A theme in Ben Mikabeen's novel, *Touching Spirit Bear*, reveals a universal truth about humanity is that an anger, possibly causing one to do unpredictable and sometimes violent things has to be controlled and forgiven through accepting help from people who have gone through the same hardships and helping to heal those who were hurt along the way.

Cole's anger issues are not only dangerous to others, but also to himself, affecting his mental resilience and his relationships with others. His unwillingness to trust anyone makes his life harder, because he doesn't accept help and always is frustrated towards others. In the beginning of the book, readers meet Cole's warden, Garvey, who acts as a mentor, doing his best to help Cole by teaching him lessons. "Cole let his irritation show. "Not mixed together, stupid." Garvey stood and walked wearily to the door... [Garvey] let himself out the steel door without saying goodbye." (Mikabeen 28-30). Even when others are aiming to help Cole out of his state of anger, Cole refuses to accept any help and is rude and ungrateful towards others. When Cole meets the Spirit Bear, his uncontrollable, violent rage takes over as he rushes to harm the bear. "It must be scared. Why else would it just stand there instead of attacking? Cole felt his smoldering anger ignite... Even as he spoke, he started forward, gripping the knife

power of controlling others through fear did nothing to help him. Cole realizing his mistakes helped him to understand that he has to forgive his past mistakes to move on and do better in his life, because he had to be able to make better decisions for the future.

When Cole forgives himself and accepts help from others, he learns valuable lessons from his mentors and also does his best to help Peter Driscals recover. While on his second time on the island, Edwin teaches Cole lessons about healing. Like accepting that "anger is a memory never forgotten," or smacking in the pond to let your mind rest free and connect with nature, both of which help Cole heal over time. Readers can see Cole's attitude improvement when he forgives himself and forces himself to take the steps towards healing. "Each morning, he walked in the pond, and carried the ancestor rock,

message about the path thers

and forgiveness, and helping others on their path to healing is shown through a troubled finally receiving consequences for his actions. The consequences that Cole receives end his rage to the world, and ultimately making him a better person. Readers understand the lesson he is trying to convey about not only helping yourself, but also others in order for a

Thematic Analysis: *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton

In the story *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton, the world is divided into two groups: hoodlum greasers and privileged soxes. At least, that's how it looks to the main character, Ponyboy. These two groups are constantly battling heads, and even to Pony's charming older brother, Sodapop, a seemingly insurmountable wall of differences is growing between them. But as Ponyboy, his brother, and their friend Dally navigate through this world of prejudice and hatred, both Ponyboy and the reader learn that one's identity is defined not by their socioeconomic status or appearance, but by their adaptations to the harsh realities of life, as evidenced by Sodapop Curtis and Dally Winston.

Sodapop's carefree and wild-spirited nature, the method by which he copes with difficult situations, is the result of his brothers' constant arguing. The Curtis brothers, Sodapop, the main character Ponyboy, and the eldest brother Darry, were thrown into a tough set of circumstances when they lost their parents in a car crash. Ponyboy explains bitterly about how Darry became cold and demanding following their deaths, as he assumed the responsibilities of taking care of the family. Contrastly, he mentions that "Soda [...] understood everything, almost. Like he's never hollering at me all the time the way Darry do?" Readers are able to understand that while Darry became colder and tougher after this tragedy, Sodapop felt empathy and love take hold. Instead of giving up and becoming depressed, Soda's love for the world has expanded once he understands that nothing lasts forever. It's almost as though Sodapop doesn't have time to dwell on the impossibility of their situation but instead wants to experience life to its fullest. It's his infectious, endearing, obvious love for the world that makes Sodapop the most magnetic person in Ponyboy's life. Although Ponyboy was under the impression that Sodapop had zero challenges at all, he comes to understand that Soda has actually been suffering in silence, and that part of the

different ways, however, as shown by Dally Winston.

As a result of Dally's time on the wrong side of New York, both his cold-hearted nature and his fierce loyalty have been heightened. Dally Winston is the toughest member of Ponyboy's gang. Having spent his entire life up until now on the streets of New York, Dally has hardened beyond recognition. But even though to Ponyboy it seems like Dally cares for no one but himself, readers get a small glimpse of his real feelings when he tries to stop Johnny from turning himself in to the police. He says, "I just don't want you to get hurt. [...] You got hardened in jail. Ain't want that to happen to you. Like it happened to me... " (90). Dally, the cold-hearted greaser who once grand when he learned of Bob's murder at Johnny's hand, is pleading with Johnny because he understands the severity of what happened to himself. Owing to the fact that he grew up in a neighborhood full of crime, Dally learned from a young age to be harsh and

to trouble. As mentioned before, words, and he and Ponyboy are always arguments are having on Soda until it to hear" all fight. Sometimes... I " (75) which starts both Darry and ng that they shared Sodapop the ve and terrible, and inadvertently be the middlemen in these fights,

only they still have left. So get up by Ponyboy's constant wear. As to be the happy, empathetic

harsh realities can manifest in many

times. However, although it's true that Dally was in New York, the other reason is also true: Dally's

the development of one's identity, the way in which he can respond. Sodapop Curtis's happy-go-lucky,

negative personality is the result of his brothers' love, more negative emotions for a long time. However, while some people are able to grow and learn from their difficult situations,

Dally Winston is evidence that sometimes a can go in the opposite direction, and one's harsh realities do nothing but scar them irreversibly. This is true all around the world. There are too many miles of people who are discriminated against and persecuted because of their skin color,

identity. No one is born inherently good or evil. Identities are shaped by the influences one grows up around. Let it be a lesson to readers to surround oneself with good influences in the hopes that one might take on those traits.

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Sixth Grade *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

Seventh Grade *Touching Spirit Bear*

12

Eighth Grade *The Outsiders*

A Progression of Analytical Writing ELA Grades 9/10 and 11/12

Pride and Masculinity: One Man's Rough Journey Toward the Holy Grail

Throughout history, there have been traditions and ceremonies that signal a young man's passage into adulthood where he may rightfully claim his masculinity and pride. For many, these ceremonies include tests of strength or memorization of scripture. However, in Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, Walter Lee Younger's path is not so clear. Walter lives with his family in a cramped apartment on the south side of Chicago. With Walter's father having recently passed, a \$10,000 life insurance check is heading the Youngers' way. Walter knows that following his father's death, he is technically the man of the house—he just needs to prove it to his family. As a beginning step toward this goal, Walter dreams of buying a liquor store not only for the income it will generate, but also because as an established business owner, his family will finally see his masculinity more clearly. Hansberry details Walter's attempts to reshape his family's impression of his masculinity in order to explore how pride can both divide people and bring them together.

Walter's heavy pursuit of the insurance money to buy his liquor store appears selfish and immature on the surface, but upon closer inspection it is apparent that selfless motives, such as being a good provider, lay behind the seemingly egoistic goal. Early in the play, while Walter argues about money with his wife, Ruth, he shares a realization: "This morning, I was lookin' in the mirror and thinking about it... I'm thirty-five years old; I been married eleven years and I got a boy who sleeps in the living room and all I got to give him is stories about how rich white

surrounding how the money could be best put to use. The Younger family is slow to realize how Walter's aspirations are a building block toward opening their eyes to his masculinity.

Even when Walter's impulsive attempts to change his family's view of his masculinity fail and lead to division within the Younger household, he persists, which demonstrates how substantial his desperation for respect truly is. Following Walter's business partner Bobo's grim announcement that their other partner had run off with their money, Mama has a rare angry spell. She recalls her memories of how hard her late husband worked for his money and then confronts Walter: "You—you give it all away in a day" (129). Walter's poorly-thought-out idea was meant to bring good fortune to his family and open their eyes to his masculinity. Instead, it leads to intense division and anger. Even Mama, who is typically laid back, begins to beat Walter viciously. Instead of changing his family's view of his masculinity, Walter effectively engulfs them in chaos and makes himself look like a naive child. Following his beating and subsequent

Walter changes course and informs Linder: "We come from people who had a lot of pride. I mean: we are very proud people." Walter continues, "We have decided to move into our house

Tavis to remain seated. Mama ensures that Walter does the right thing. She knows that if it is pride that Walter's after, he will not show weakness in front of his son. If Walter conveys to a white man, it will seal a life-long image into Tavis's mind and will contradict what Walter has tried to teach his son about his rightful place in the world. As a result of his son's presence,

Walter changes course and informs Linder: "We come from people who had a lot of pride. I mean: we are very proud people." Walter continues, "We have decided to move into our house

ter than his own. He plans to
at wealth. Although Walter's
it as selfish. They believe that
nd, will mean they
e engaging with his sister,
Ruth into the conflict. "Don't

Linder, a white man and member of the
order to sell him the Younger's newly bought
l Mr. Lindner. Walter references their earlier
hanged in the family within only a few lines,
read folks this afternoon, yeah. We were still
e that his mistake has torn his family apart and
stead of reflecting on how his thoughtless and
ter attempts to prove himself got again by

in to the white man, he goes against everything
a anxieties avoid his. Walter is willing to
own. In the process, instead of bringing his
t.

ying the characteristics that the Younger family
nke his family finally see him as a true man
Tavis tells Tavis to go downstairs so he does not
e and addresses her family, "No, Tavis, you
what you doing, Walter Lee" (147). By telling

Walter's attempts to reshape his
pride can both divide pe
side for his family in gra
nient burdens posed by society. He dreams of being the respected man of his fan
his own actions, combined with society's constant repression, lead to him falling
goal. The desire to be seen as masculine and to provide for the family is still a go
men in current times. Unfortunately, the theme of societal repression also still ap
years after the play was written. How long will it take to break the societal chain
many men from attaining their aspirations of being seen as masculine providers by their
families?

To Drink or Not to Drink: Gertrude's Transformation Through Tragedy

Women are the abated architects of progress, shaping societies with resilience and vision, only to look around at the world they built and see no traces of themselves. Even in our modern age, where claims of equality echo loudly, women face the insidious weight of centuries-old biases that dismiss their personhood. In *Hamlet*, Gertrude stands in the center of the storm that rages through the court of Denmark, but her form is blurry, her identity refracted through the perceptions of the men around her. Perhaps it is her silence that granted others the power to speak for her, both a subject and object. Or, possibly, she never had a choice; maybe she created her own choice and, in doing so, subverted society itself. In the play, Gertrude navigates the tension between female autonomy and patriarchal control, her choices distorted by societal expectations and male perceptions; yet through her journey, she transforms into a figure whose final act of agency is so potent, so monumental, it destabilizes the structures that sought to restrain her.

Paving past the prejudice of misogyny and outmoded standards of conduct, Gertrude's decision to marry Claudius must be considered with an awareness of the political landscape that devalues her autonomy, creating an illusion of freedom to conceal this doomed fate, set and still her of a world that thrives on

is-to-play, Gertrude is forced to
at have shaped her life.

Following Claudius's abrupt exit from the play, Hamlet's suspicions are confirmed, and he descends into a furious outburst. During a pivotal confrontation in her chamber following this affair, Gertrude's response to Hamlet's tirade—"Thou turns my eyes into my very soul, / And there I see such black and grained spots / As will not leave their tinct"—describes the psychological toll this gendered burden has on her, driving her to confront her own grief and complicity in the moral decay surrounding her (3.2. 109-102). As Gertrude is faced with the weight of Hamlet's misogynistic accusations, rather than merely internalizing shame, contorting to fit into these neat expectations, she demonstrates a deep self-awareness, acknowledging that his scrutiny causes her to examine the scars marring her psyche; they are a disease, a mutation of

ends—Claudius, Laertes, and ultimately, Hamlet—each succumbing to the chaos and corruption that Gertrude's act of defiance has laid bare.

Kingdom after her husband's
ould be rendered obsolete.
/ the very men who feel
's sexuality epitomizes this
nate. In his scathing
ity to incestuous sheets,"
as is much more than a moral
ity itself (1.2. 161-162).

affirms that her own transfor
ignites a palpable fear of
er of a world that thrives on

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ring point: as she confronts the violence of
women to their ability to men, it marks the first moment
entity—a deliberate rejection of the roles imposed on her.
e precisely what these pervasive male thoughts look like,
at they were placed there, now burrowed beneath her skin,

realization culminates in the final act: drinking from the
lizes not only an ultimate sacrifice but also a transcendent
flood. Amidst the chaos of the fencing match between
iting and Claudius's deadly plot in play, Gertrude raises a
on to her lips. Gertrude boldly defies Claudius for the first
try you pardon me" (5.2. 318). She was a wife twice, a
as her respect in the institution of marriage wanes, her
seems she has been unshackled. In a society where men
sacrifice disrupts the status quo, setting in motion a chain
is the fate of a woman finally unleashed, her
e the roles of wife and mother were her
ignite all too well. Across the world, women
omy as a threat, a political matter rather than a
ive moment, revealing just how inherently unstable these

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assumption of women's compliance. In this final parting act, she reveals the inherent weakness
of patriarchal power structures when confronted by a woman's willingness to sacrifice
everything to reclaim her identity, to reclaim herself. This cathartic moment is not just an
instance of individual liberation; it is a testament to the enduring power of feminine resistance,

Ninth/Tenth Grade *A Raisin in the Sun*

Eleventh/Twelfth Grade *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*



Works Cited

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Edited by Barbara A. Mowat
chaucer, 2012.

Summary and Next Steps

- Examine and refine cross-curricular writing expectations
- Collaborate on development of standards-based writing progressions across grades and in building transition years
- Continue and expand systems for sharing student writing samples across grade level and building transitions
- Continue to develop and refine Tier 1 Strategies to ensure that all students are working toward grade-level expectations aligned with district and state standards
- Continue to promote enrichment opportunities (Poetry Out Loud, Writing Contests, Literary Magazine, School Newspaper, etc.)

