



Closing the Skills Gap for Struggling High School Students: A Course Proposal

Pittsville High School English Department

English Fundamentals

Intro & Objective

Current Reality:

- Some high school students are entering without foundational English skills.
- Lack of intervention in English leads to slow growth, or stagnant performance. This has a lifelong impact on learners.

Objective: English Fundamentals course addition for 9th Grade

Create and implement a foundational English course to attempt to replicate the success seen in the PHS Math Department (pre-algebra).

**Rename English 9
"English 1"**

**Rename English 10
"English 2"**

**This would remove the
stigma for students taking a
course that isn't for "their"
class rank.**

HS English Department Proposed Changes

**English 1
1.0 Credit, semester**

**English 2
1.0 Credit, semester**

**English Fundamentals
1.0 Credit, semester**

Adult Literacy Facts

36
million

adults in the United States cannot read, write or do basic math above a third-grade level



Children whose parents have low literacy levels have a

72%

chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves. These children are more likely to get poor grades, display behavioral problems, have high absentee rates, repeat school years or drop out.



\$225 billion

Cost each year in non-productivity in the workforce, crime and loss of tax revenue.

\$232 billion

a year in health care costs is linked to low adult literacy skills



43%

of adults with the lowest levels of literacy live in poverty



What does this mean?

65 MILLION ADULTS

are unable to perform everyday tasks, such as:



signing their name on a signature line



reading warning labels on medication

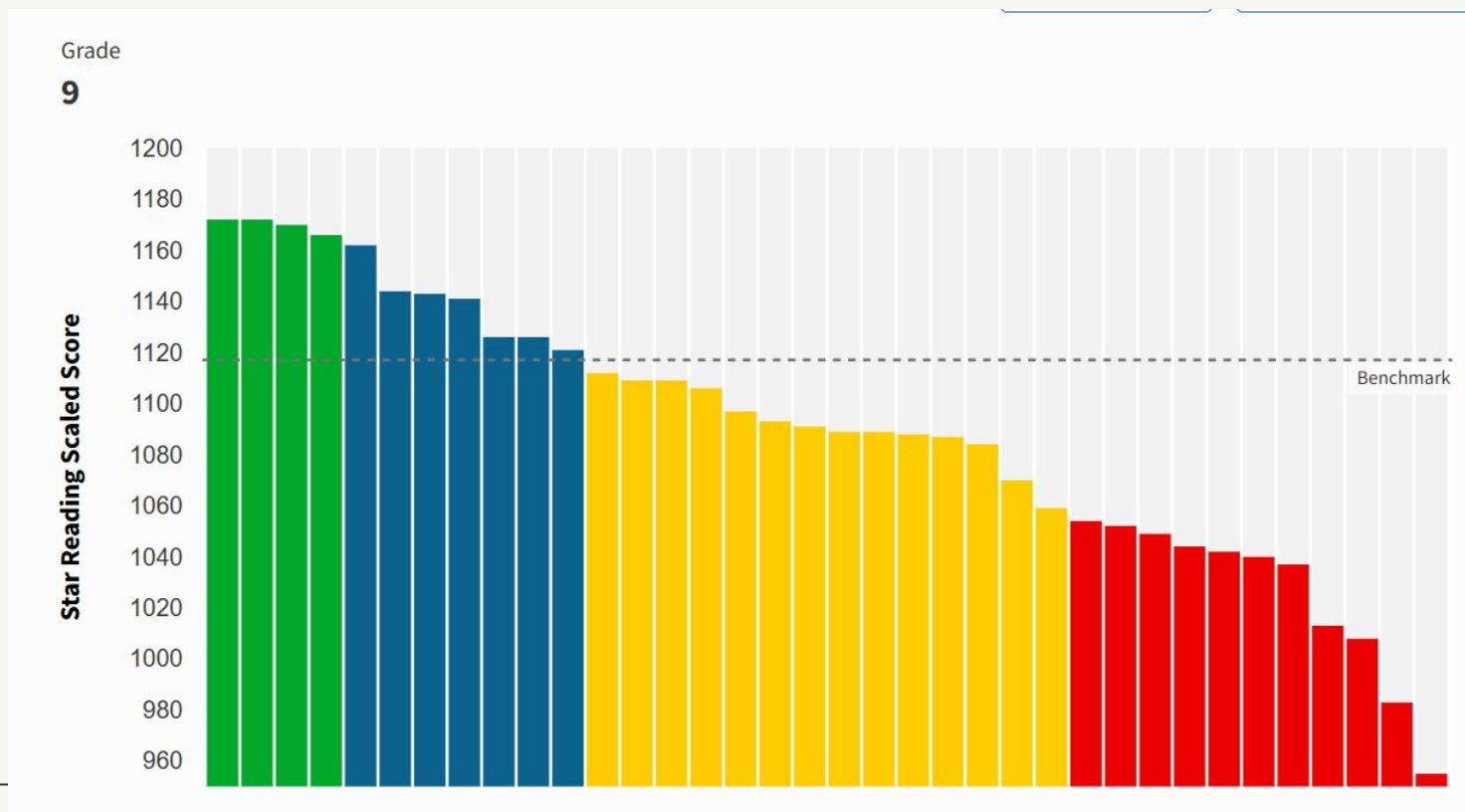


calculating the cost on an order form



locating streets on a map

Class of 2028 - Entrance Data



What

Skills Gap on Entry:

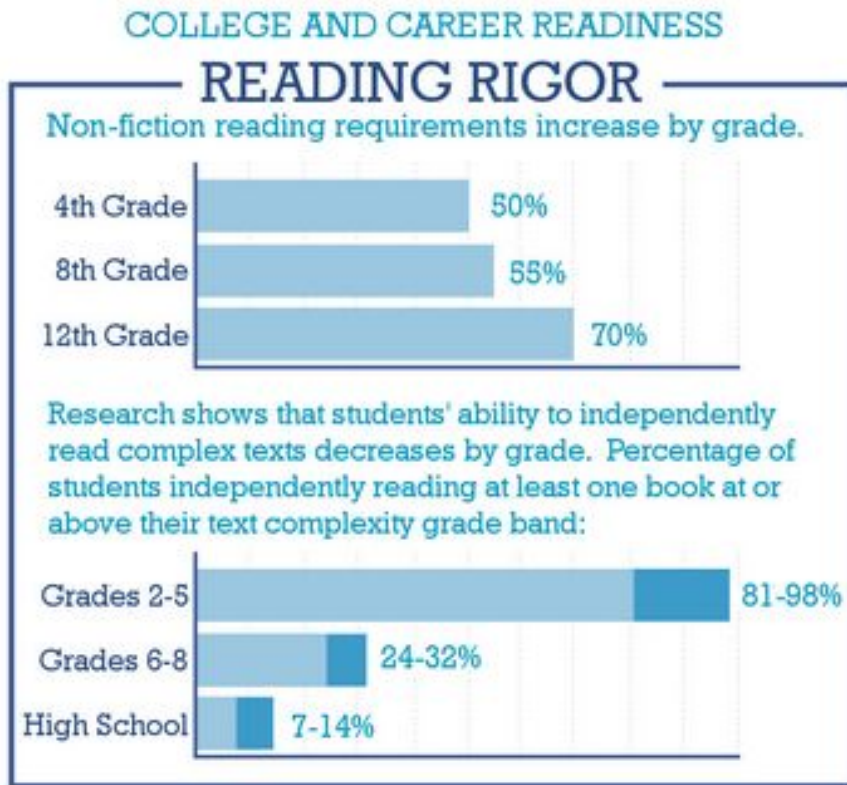
Students lack basic skills in reading comprehension, analysis, grammar, and writing.

Similar to the math skills gap that is currently being addressed in-part with the HS Pre-Algebra course.

Impact on Performance:

Difficulty succeeding in advanced courses.

Limited ability to be college and career ready



Why

Math growth: Exceptional, possibly due to targeted interventions.

English growth: Growing more slowly than math, possibly due to absence of similar supports for struggling learners.

Equitable Access: We have supports in place for advanced learners (test-out) but nothing for those who struggle the most.

Lifelong Importance

Proficiency in English is critical for:

- Academic success.
- Communication and critical thinking.
- College and career readiness.



National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2019

How

Key Components:

- Focus on filling gaps in foundational reading and writing skills (e.g., reading fluency and stamina, writing in increasingly analytical ways).
 - Use texts with complex themes, but a more accessible text complexity level.
 - Work to prepare students with the skills and stamina to handle the increased complexity and analytical nature of HS courses.
- Small classes of approximately 6-8 students identified based on data and teacher recommendation to allow for greater alignment in closing skills gaps.
- Continued collaboration between English 6-12 to bridge middle-to-high-school gaps.

Anticipated Outcome

Student Success:

- Improved performance in all English courses.
- Increased numbers of students taking more rigorous courses.
- Success in all high school courses through improved literacy skills.

Future Readiness:

- Preparedness for post-secondary education and career pathways.
- Increase in student confidence and communication skills.

CESA 5 Schools With Supports

1. **Marshfield:** English Foundations prior to 9th grade regular English for select students in English and social studies. Students are placed at the foundation level based on teacher recommendations using various data points.
2. **Nekoosa:** Students take a year of grade level English. Due to identified need, this year during second semester they are implementing a Reading/Writing skills class for students who struggled through Freshman English or had difficulty with those skills in other content areas. They will have this class in addition to Freshman English in semester 2
3. **Waupaca:** Offers what they call “Supplemental English” with a similar curriculum plan, but it is required to be taken concurrently with their English 9 Fundamentals, which has a very similar curriculum to PHS current ENG 9. They also offer a similar option for students in 10th grade. Class sizes are approximately 7-8, identified utilizing student data and some teacher recommendations.
4. **Wisconsin Rapids:** does not have a remedial English class for 9th grade students. If students struggle with reading, they may be placed in a Reading Essentials class in the same term(s) they have English so they have some additional support.
5. **Wild Rose:** Does have an “English 9A” prior to ENG 9, similar curriculum to what we are proposing

CESA 5 Schools With Some Supports

1. **Iola-Scandinavia:** Does offer similar courses, but they are not offered until Grade 12
2. **Necedah:** Has 2 different pathways: a Technical College/Apprenticeship Pathway, and a College Pathway
3. **Portage:** Offers technical English as a 12th grade option
4. **Reedsburg:** regular and accelerated track for 9th
5. **Rio:** Offers an advanced track beginning in grade 10
6. **Rosholt:** Offers what they call “Practical English” as a non-college track option for grade 11-12 (curriculum appears to be very similar to many of our current CTE course offerings at PHS)
7. **Sauk Prairie:** Offers similar courses for grades 11-12
8. **Stevens Point:** Offers a regular and advanced track for 9th grade
9. **Wautoma:** offers a college track and regular track beginning in grade 10

CESA 5 Schools Without Supports

1. **Auburndale**
2. **Almond Bancroft**
3. **Neillsville**
4. **Pittsville**
5. **Port Edwards**

Start

Stop

Continue

- Implement an English course to support students that have gaps in grade level skills
- Rename English 9: **English 1**
- Rename English 10: **English 2**

- Automatically assigning all 9th & 10th grade students to the same English classes based on their graduation year

- Building rigorous English courses
- Offering opportunities for advanced learners
- Evaluating program data to improve offerings for all students