

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT Teaching of Grammar and Mechanics  
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
Berkeley Heights Public Schools

THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS

PHILOSOPHY

It is the philosophy of the Berkeley Heights English Department, grades 6-12, that the teaching of grammar and usage should spring from the teaching of writing. By analyzing student writing, the teacher can look for patterns of error and address those errors through mini-lessons. The teacher can also use short mentor texts, which may be from the students' own writing or from literature, to serve as models for good writing. The use of mentor texts can show students grammar and mechanics concepts in action.

With this philosophy in mind, how can we bring consistency into the process of teaching grammar and mechanics? We believe that in addition to addressing patterns of error, teachers should also focus on a few "points of emphasis" each year so that student skills can be scaffolded effectively. We have developed these points of emphasis for each grade level from grades 6-11. Our list of points is a dynamic document that may be modified as it is piloted during 2006-2007. Student skills in grammar and mechanics will be evaluated each year through an objective assessment at the beginning and end of the school year.

References:

Anderson, Jeff. *Mechanically Inclined: Building Grammar, Usage, and Style into Writer's Workshop*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

Berger, Joan. "Transforming Writers through Grammar Study." *English Journal*, 95.5 (2006): 53-59.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

Grade 6

Focus Skills

Identifying parts of speech and the corresponding usage: nouns (abstract), adjectives, verbs,

adverbs and prepositions, articles, and pronouns.

Subject, predicate with a focus on identifying fragments and run-ons.

Singular possessives vs. contractions.

Mechanics of dialogue: proper punctuation, capitalization, and interrupters.

Commas for compound sentences.

Commonly confused words: two, to, and too.

Introduce

Rules for formal writing: no contractions, use present tense, avoid using "you", "I" and "me", and must write in paragraphs.

## Grade 7

### Focus Skills

Subject/verb agreement.  
Verb tense.  
Clarity (limit wordiness).  
Commas (specifically comma splices).  
Subject/pronoun agreement.  
Commonly confused words: their, they're and there.

Introduce  
Simple, compound, and complex sentences.

Reinforce and Refine  
Rules for formal writing: no contractions, use present tense, avoid using "you", "I" and "me", and must write in paragraphs.

## Grade 8

### Focus Skills

Sentence structure: simple, compound and complex sentences  
emphasize compound/complex sentence.  
Continued reinforcement subject/verb agreement.  
Pronoun/antecedent agreement.  
Prepositions.  
Commonly confused words: it's and its.

### Introduce

Mechanics of embedding quotations as support for an argument, research or analysis.  
Essential and nonessential elements (adjective clauses, appositives, participial phrases, and interrupters).

### Reinforce and Refine

Verb tense (specifically, past participle).

## Grade 9

### Focus Skills

Mastering identification of parts of speech and usage.  
Pronoun agreement.  
Adverbs: modifying adjectives and adverbs.  
Commas and direct quotations and distinguish between mechanics of dialogue and the mechanics of quotations as textual support.  
Commonly confused words.  
Preposition use and phrases.

### Reinforce and Refine (based on initial assessment)

Sentence structure: reinforce essential and nonessential elements (adjective

clauses, appositives, participial phrases, and interrupters).  
Complex/compound sentences to be demonstrated in effective paragraph writing.  
Rules for formal writing: no contractions, use present tense, avoid using "you",  
"I" and "me", and must write in paragraphs.  
Verb tense.  
Subject/pronoun use.  
Subject/verb agreement.

Grade 10 (English 2)

Focus Skills

Semi-colon, colon, hyphen, dash, parenthesis, brackets, slashes, ellipsis, and italics.  
Active vs. passive voice.  
Parallel structure.  
Quotations embedded accurately in the text.  
Skills that may be required on the SAT.

Reinforce and Refine

Comma, apostrophe, period, question mark, and exclamation point.  
Subject/verb agreement.  
Verb tense.

Grade 11 (English 3)

Focus Skills

Skills review and identification of weaknesses.  
Focus Skills (continued)

Reinforce concepts through writing and sentence combining activities.  
Reinforcement of the use of quotations.  
Essential and nonessential elements (adjective clauses, appositives, participial phrases, and interrupters).  
Improving sentences and self and peer editing skills.  
Review and practice of skills that may be required on the SAT.