

HUMANITIES UPDATE: 2011-12

Introduction

Last fall, the Board of Education of Evanston Township High School (ETHS) approved the redesign of biology with the understanding that a comprehensive evaluation plan would be developed and implemented for all of the humanities and biology restructuring with assistance from a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) comprised of external individuals from higher education. At the May 21, 2012 Board of Education meeting, the evaluation plan was outlined. The plan is comprehensive and long-term spanning five years. The Technical Advisory Group has made it very clear that to determine impact we need to look at the effects of the program over students' high school experience. According to our experts, the earliest potential preliminary reporting will be late 2013. With this understanding, the "Humanities Update" that is provided in this report is not summative. The data presented in this report are formative in nature and are being used to help inform implementation. This report is in two parts. Part I provides information gleaned from five sources: classroom observations; teacher focus groups and interviews; a student survey; student focus groups; and parent focus groups. Part II describes any curricular changes that will be implemented in humanities for 2012-13 based on our experience in 2011-12.

PART I: WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Classroom Observations

In the fall of 2011, a classroom observation tool was developed to look at fidelity of implementation for the freshman humanities English and history classes. The observation tool was designed to systemically collect information about the consistency and accuracy of implementation of critical components of the humanities curriculum and instruction. Specifically, observation data was collected on the following curricular and instructional aspects: 1) teachers' use of differentiated instructional strategies, including different grouping patterns (i.e., whole class, small group, and individual) and how students were placed in the groups (i.e., randomly, deliberately), and different opportunities for students to approach learning (i.e., content, process, and product); 2) types of questions asked by teachers (i.e., explicit versus inferential); 3) ways that teachers purposefully check for evidence of understanding; 4) teachers' use of a variety of modes of presentation to reach a range of learning preferences; 5) students' reading and writing experiences with text; 6) students' on-task behavior and participation; and 7) student engagement.

The observation tool was piloted in twenty English and history classrooms in the second quarter of the 2011-12 school year. The data collected during this pilot phase was used to modify and finalize the tool. Throughout a seven week period in the third quarter, 83 classroom observations were conducted by three different raters. These observations covered 40 history classrooms and 43 English classrooms for 30 minutes at a time. All twenty-two of the humanities teachers were observed during almost every period they teach. Sixty-one percent of the observations occurred in the morning during the first four periods in the day, and thirty-nine percent of the observations occurred in the afternoon during the last four periods of the day.

How are students grouped?

In a third of the English classrooms and a quarter of the history classrooms observed, the class was taught as a whole group without breaking the students into smaller groups during the 30 minute observation period. In another third of the observations, teachers were observed using multiple grouping strategies (i.e., pairs, whole group, small group, and individual). For the remaining amount of class periods observed, instruction was provided in one of the following configurations: small groups; pairs; or

individual. The time constraint of only 30 minute observations limited the observer's ability to see all of the grouping strategies that were implemented within a full 42 minute class period.

What are teachers doing and saying?

Explicit and inferential questions

The observation tool was used to collect data on two kinds of questions teachers pose. Explicit questions are straightforward more factual in nature and ask for "right there" answers. In contrast, inferential questions are of a higher cognitive nature and ask students to combine prior knowledge or experience and apply critical thinking skills to answer a question. Both types of questions are important and serve instructional purposes. In the humanities courses, English and history teachers ask both explicit and inferential questions of students to solicit their understanding of the topic being discussed. For seven percent of the English classrooms observed and 18 percent of the history classrooms observed, teachers only used explicit questioning. In all other classes, questioning was both explicit and inferential. Following is a sample of inferential questions that were asked:

English

- *Love is being compared to what?*
- *What do these dreams reveal about Romeo?*
- *What is he foreshadowing in those last few lines?*

History

- *How are these terms different?*
- *How do we know that a government is strong?*
- *What do you mean by larger and more complex empires?*

Following is a sample of explicit questions that were asked:

English

- *What is the rhyming format here? How many lines are in a sonnet?*
- *Can you give me an example of a poetic device?*
- *What does a good story have?*

History

- *How did the Black Death spread?*
- *What's a caravan? What's the Kabba?*
- *The word Islam means...? Which is not prohibited in Islam?*

Checking for evidence of understanding

In sixty-five percent (65%) of the history observations and 79% of the English observations, teachers checked for evidence of understanding in a purposeful way, including the use of openers¹, exit slips², and formative assessments³. As our observations only covered the first 30 minutes of a class period, the observers were unable to record any exit slips which are generally given at the end of the class period.

¹ An opener is defined as an activity or problem utilized to review material or to activate or challenge the brain.

² An exit slip is a problem or activity that is utilized to demonstrate understanding of a skill or concept that is taught in a lesson.

³ Formative assessments are on-going assessments, reviews, and observations in a classroom used to ascertain student understanding and monitor instruction and learning.

Differentiation in mode of presentation

While auditory, or lecturing, is the most commonly used mode of presentation by both English and history teachers, it is frequently coupled with visual presentations. History teachers used visual modes of presentations (such as document cameras to model note-taking or PowerPoint slides) in 65 percent of the observations, and English teachers used visual means in 49 percent of the observations. Other modes of presentations used included computers (i.e., students utilized computers to do research), reading out loud, conducting performances, or presentations in class. In addition, English teachers used more than one mode of presentation in about 70 percent of the observations and history teachers used more than one mode of presentation in about 90 percent of the observations during a class period.

Table 1

Mode of Presentation	English	History
Visual	49%	65%
Auditory	70%	68%
Other	30%	28%

Student engagement

Classroom observations provide a snapshot of how many students were on task and participating during any given day and period. Students were considered to be off task and not participating if they were working on homework for a different class, holding side conversations, or doing something other than focusing and engaging in the class discussion. Throughout the observations, students were found to be engaged a majority of the time. Over 90 percent of the classroom observations in both English and history found at least 80 percent or more of the students to be on task and participating.

Table 2

% of Students on Task & Participating	% of English Observations	% of History Observations
90% or more students	79%	67%
80% or more students	93%	93%

In presentations or activities, very few connections were made between the English and history content. Connections between the two subjects were observed only 10 percent of the time. The data corroborate what both English and history teachers have said in focus groups about the need for more connections between the subjects.

What are students doing and saying?

Differentiation in approach to learning

Students are given the option to approach learning in different ways through content (i.e., choice of different assignments), process (i.e., different ways to take notes or analyze text), or product (i.e., different ways to report or present student work). It is important to note that it is not possible or pedagogically desirable to differentiate instruction 100 percent of the time.

Process. Students were given choice in the process they could use to approach tasks in about 50 percent of the observations in both English and history.

Content. Differentiation in content was the most difficult to observe because it required observing the type of tasks that were assigned to see if students had choice within these assignments. The observers did not always have an opportunity to ask teachers about the assignment given, especially if it was a task

assigned prior to the class period observed. For the times we observed teachers handing out assignments, students had a choice in how they could approach learning in 39 percent of the observations in English and 18 percent of the observations in history.

Product. When students made presentations or reported out from their small group discussions, differentiation of the product was observed. Students were given flexibility in the type of presentation they could choose in about 49 percent of the English classrooms and 35 percent of the history classrooms.

Reading and writing

The intent of the new humanities curriculum is to increase the amount of reading and writing expected of students. Students were seen reading both silently and out loud in 77 percent of the English classrooms and 56 percent of the history classrooms observed.

Writing opportunities include “learning to write,” “writing to learn,” and “being prepped to write.” The form of writing most commonly observed was “writing to learn,” which includes different forms of note-taking (i.e., annotation, Cornell notes, etc.). Students were observed “writing to learn” in 49 percent of the English classrooms observed and in 54 percent of the history classrooms observed. Students were observed being “prepped to write,” which includes completing a graphic organizer or document based question (DBQ) outline in 16 percent of the English classrooms observed and in 33 percent of the history classrooms observed. Students were also given the opportunity to learn to write, which includes writing essays or answering open-ended questions. This type of writing generally occurred toward the end of the quarter or as practice before an earned honors credit assessment. Students were observed doing this type of writing in 19 percent of the English classrooms observed and in 10 percent of the history classrooms observed.

Table 3

Form of Writing	English	History
Writing to learn	49%	54%
Prepped to write	16%	33%
Learning to write	19%	10%

In addition to reading and writing, students were observed interacting with the text (i.e., annotating or referencing the novel or textbook) in 72 percent of the English classrooms observed and in 63 percent of the history classrooms observed. Students used support mechanisms such as graphic organizers or study guides more frequently in history than English; 73 percent and 47 percent of the observations, respectively.

Future observations

There are some limitations to the data collected in the classroom observations. The observations only covered 30 minutes of a 42 minute period, thus it was not possible to observe what took place at the end of a class period. This time constraint also limited the observer’s ability to see all of the grouping strategies that were implemented within a full class period. It is recommended that future observations incorporate the end of a class period to view the frequency of exit slips and other strategies that may occur during the last 10-12 minutes of class.

The observation tool attempted to capture how often explicit versus inferential questions were asked. Future observations should try to more fully quantify the number of explicit versus inferential questions asked during the class period, thus enhancing the ability to explore in depth the types of questions students are asked throughout the period.

Good instruction is complex and a blend of many strategies and approaches, and it is not possible or pedagogically desirable to differentiate instruction 100 percent of the time. It was difficult to observe differentiation in content because it required observing the assignments or tasks handed out to see if students had choice within these assignments. Future observations should try to capture the nature of assignments during the class period. If the observations incorporate the end of a class period, it will be easier to find an opportunity to ask teachers about a particular assignment.

Teacher Perspective

Two focus groups were held during the 2011-12 school year with the freshman humanities teachers. In the second quarter, eight English teachers participated in a focus group, and in the third quarter six history teachers participated in a focus group. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather feedback from teachers about the strengths and weaknesses of the new freshman humanities curriculum, the earned honors credit model, and any recommendations for improving the course.

In addition to these focus groups, during the fourth quarter American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted structured interviews with three English and three history teachers. The purpose of these interviews was to gather feedback from teachers on several constructs, including the academic rigor of the course, students' level of motivation, effective effort, and student supports. Some findings in these interviews were consistent with those from the focus groups, including the increased rigor of the course and the sense of community within the classroom. These interviews also provided more of an opportunity for teachers to comment on the level of student motivation and effective effort they saw within their classrooms. Following is a summary of the main talking points expressed across the focus groups and interviews.

Teacher focus groups

Strengths of the program. When asked about the strengths of the current humanities model, English teachers mentioned the flexible scheduling, the ability to team with their history partner, more opportunities to teach writing, and the opportunity for all students to access honors credit. History teachers commented they saw a difference this year in the rigor of the course compared to last year. Some of the teachers also discussed the development of students' sense of community within the classroom.

Areas for improvement. Teachers in both groups were asked what they felt could be improved in the current humanities course. English teachers discussed the complexities of the earned honors credit model, the grading system, and pressure to prepare students for the assessments. Factors that contributed to this pressure were the limited amount of time they had available to plan, grade, meet with their partner, and meet with students. English teachers also expressed a need for a vertical alignment with subsequent courses in the English department, and in particular the structure of the sophomore year.

The discussion with the history teachers focused more on the new World History For Us All (WHFUA) curriculum and recommendations for improving the course overall. Recommendations for improvement included narrowing the course content, better teaming with their English partners, rescaling the assessments, and rescaling the quarter project. The teachers felt there should be fewer assessments and that the assessments should be common across the English and history departments. Overall, history teachers felt the earned honors credit assessment system is a good model, and discussed the possibility of adding more writing in collaboration with their English partners. Both groups discussed the possibility of improved teaming with their partners, and history teachers would like to have more opportunities for discussions on how to better integrate the two courses.

Teacher interviews

Student motivation. Teachers cited a number of factors that motivate students, including grades, interesting material, parental expectations, the prospect of college, and choice in assignment.

Effective effort. Teachers agreed that while most students want to be successful, there is a mix in terms of work ethic. Teachers pointed out that freshmen are 14-year-olds, who are “on it some days and some days they’re going to be off.”

Academic rigor. According to teachers, most students were meeting course objectives with some scaffolding in place to help them succeed. Teachers identified students who need extra reading help as a group that needs particular support with the curriculum.

Student support. Teachers acknowledged that many students do not take advantage of the structured supports available. Students were, however, more open to supports offered by teachers with whom they were comfortable. Students were also more apt to seek assistance through available structured supports prior to assessments.

Peer support and connection. While it may have taken time to develop, teachers agreed that student belonging and support was evident in their classrooms by spring. Some teachers noted that creating a community in their classrooms of diverse learners was a particular emphasis for them throughout the school year.

Student Survey Results

ETHS freshmen were surveyed in spring 2012 about their experiences in their humanities classes. Students were asked to use a scale of 1 to 5 to rate their level of agreement with several statements, as well as rate the amount of effort put forth or amount of improvement made in a variety of areas. The results below report student responses with a rating of 4 or 5.

Effort & Motivation Overall

Figure 1

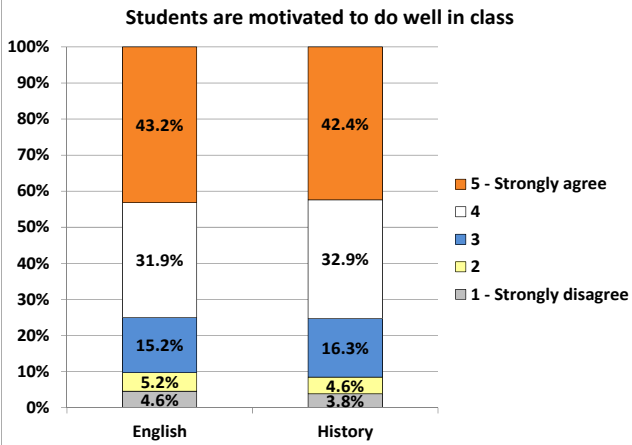
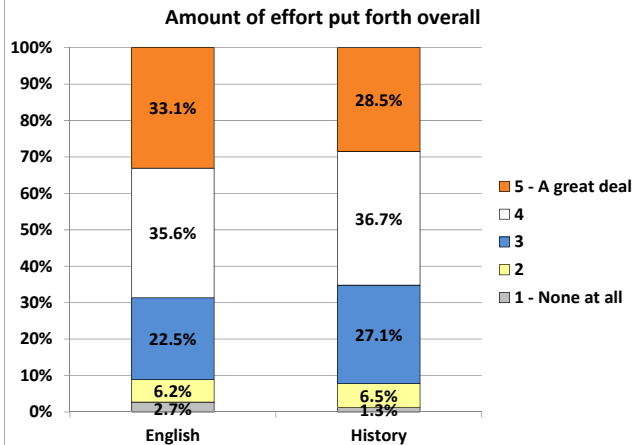


Figure 2



- 75% of the freshmen feel they are motivated to do well in their English and history classes.
- At least two-thirds of the freshmen report putting a lot of effort into their English (69%) and history (65%) classes.

Effort & Motivation to Earn Honors Credit

Figure 3

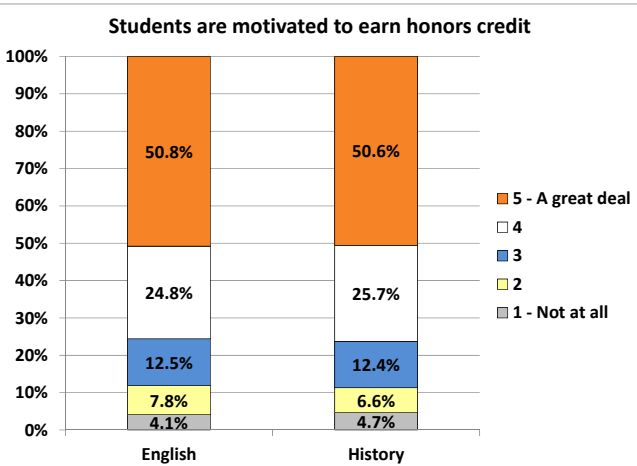
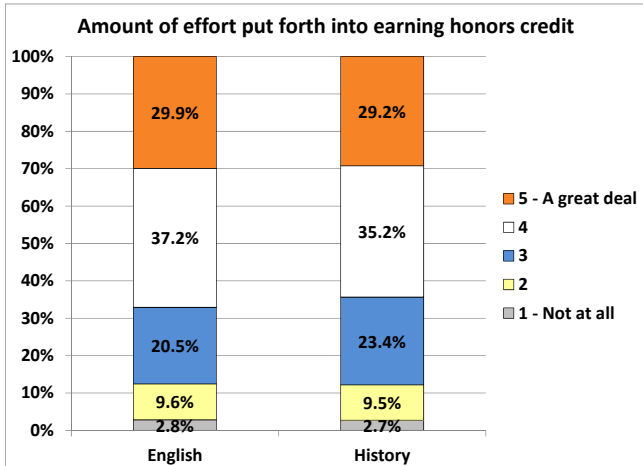


Figure 4



- 75% of the freshmen also report being motivated to earn honors credit in English and history.
- About two-thirds of the freshmen report putting a lot of effort into earning honors credit in English (67%) and history (64%).

Effort Put Into and Difficulty of Benchmark Assessments

Figure 5

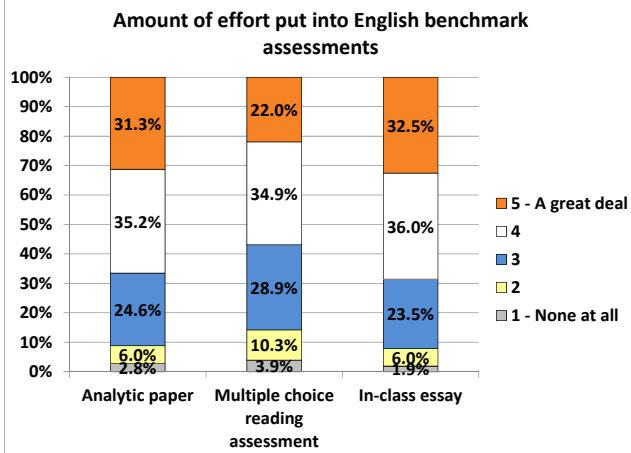
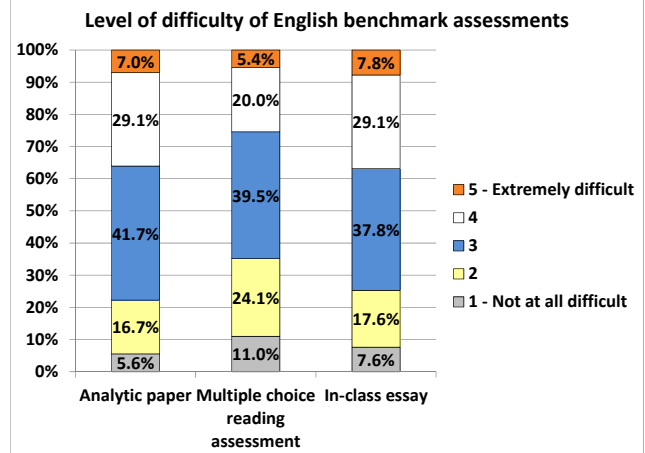


Figure 6



Students were asked about the amount of effort they put into the English benchmark assessments and the level of difficulty of those assessments. A majority of students felt they put a lot of effort into the assessments, and also reported they did not think the assessments were too difficult (i.e., rating of 4 or 5).

- 67% put a lot to a great deal of effort into the analytic paper; 36% felt it was very difficult
- 57% put a lot to a great deal of effort into the reading assessment; 25% felt it was very difficult
- 69% put a lot of effort into the in-class essay; 37% felt it was very difficult

Figure 7

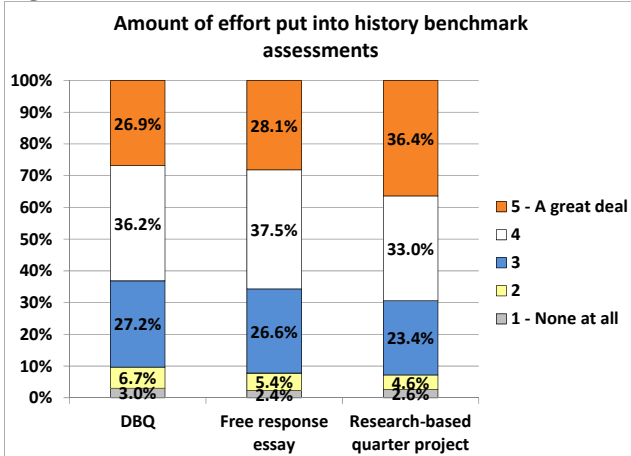
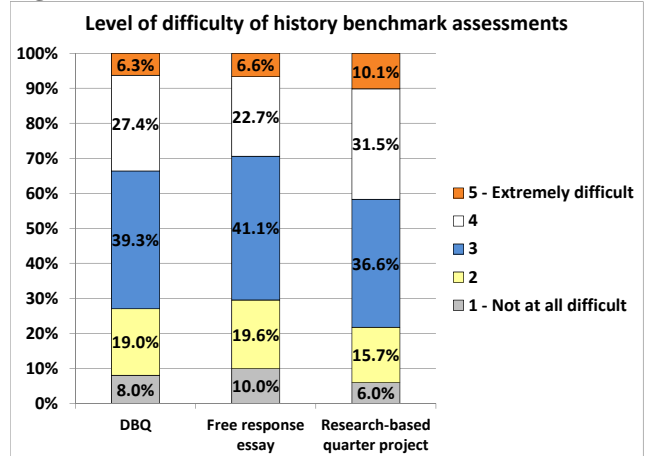


Figure 8

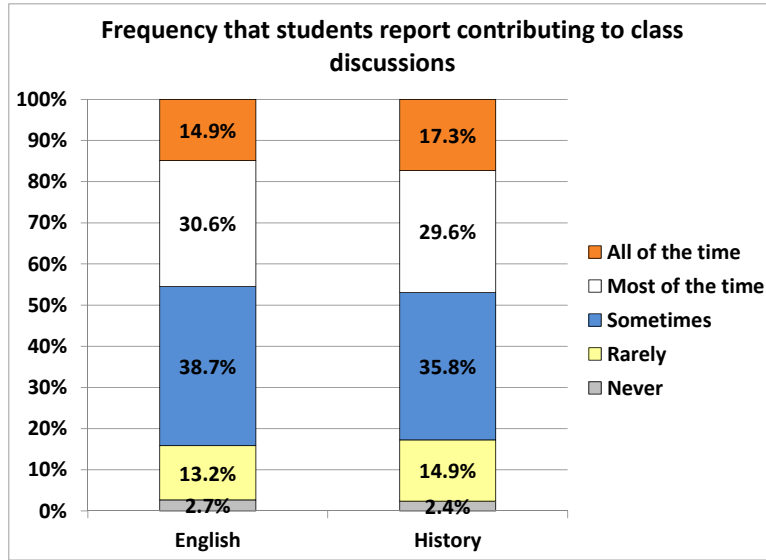


Students were also asked about the amount of effort they put into the history benchmark assessments and their level of difficulty. Similar to the English assessments, most students felt they put a lot of effort into the assessments, and reported that they did not think they were too difficult (rating of 4 or 5).

- 63% put a lot to a great deal of effort into the DBQ; 34% felt it was very difficult
- 66% put a lot to a great deal of effort into the free response essay; 29% felt it was very difficult
- 69% put a lot of effort into the research-based quarter project; 42% felt it was very difficult

Participation in Class Discussions

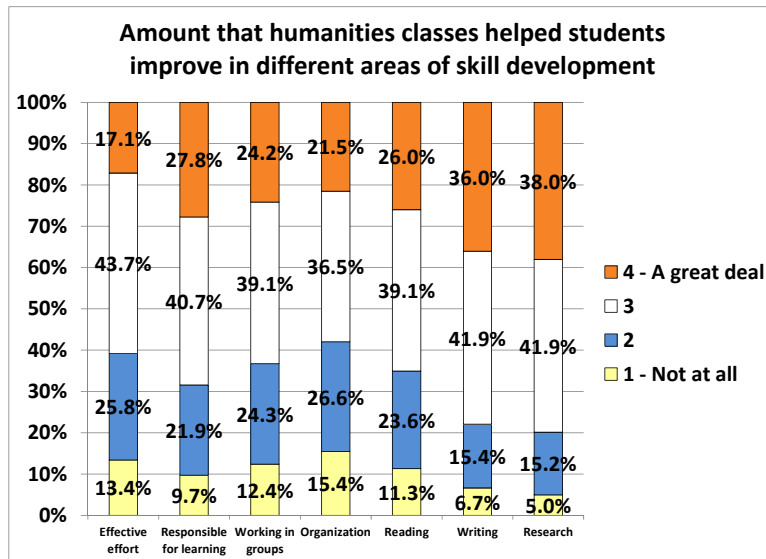
Figure 9



- Nearly one half of the students reported contributing to their English and history class discussions most or all of the time.

Skill Development

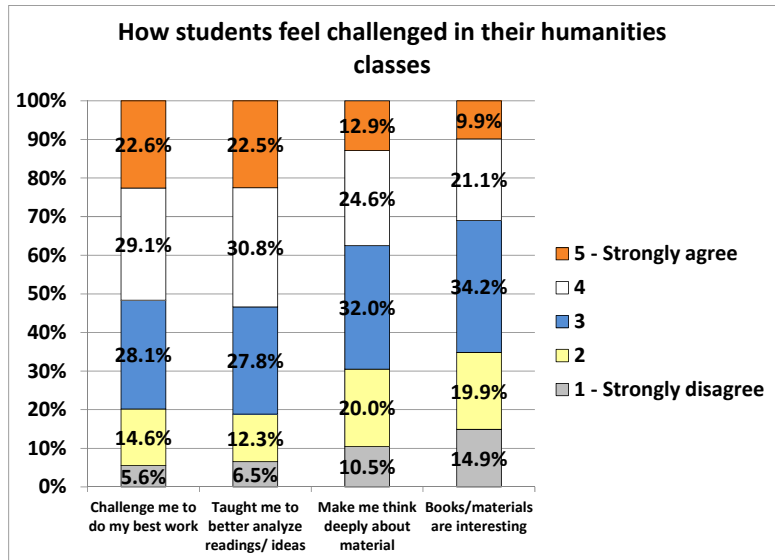
Figure 10



- Nearly 80% of students believed their humanities classes helped them improve in writing and research.

Rigor

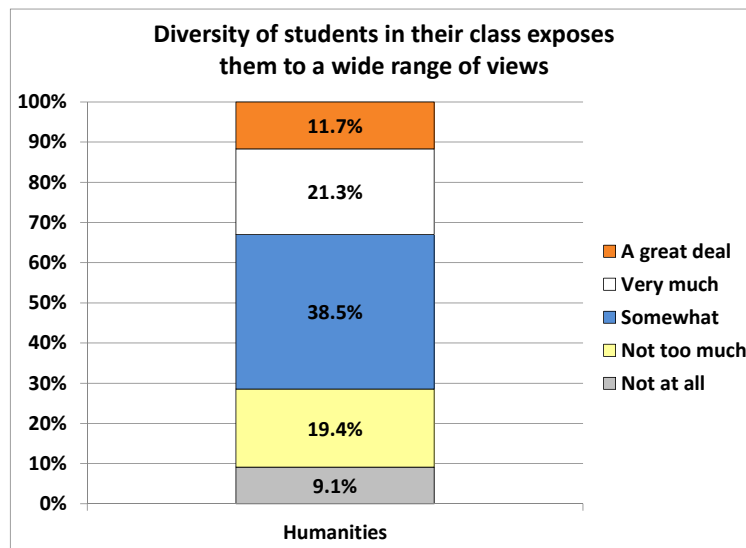
Figure 11



- Over 50% of students agreed that their humanities classes challenge them to do their best work and have taught them to better analyze readings and ideas.
- 38% of students agree or strongly agree that their humanities class makes them think deeply.
- Less than one third of students find the books and other materials interesting.

Diversity

Figure 12



- 33% of students feel the diversity of students in their humanities class exposes them to a wide range of views very much or a great deal, while another 39% feel they are somewhat exposed to a wide range of views.

Students were also asked to comment on several open-ended questions, including what they felt were the strengths of their humanities classes, what they would change, what kind of help they should have to make them more successful, as well as any other comments regarding their freshman humanities experience.

Students emphasized a number of specific ways in which their English and history classes benefitted them during the school year. Students indicated a major strength of the program was the time spent developing good writing skills, especially in terms of text analysis and research strategies. Among the most favored aspects of the humanities classes were the amount of group work and the number of in-class discussions, as these activities allowed students more personal interaction and the opportunity to hear diverse opinions.

Students gave mixed reviews on a couple of items. Many students found the material interesting and engaging, and the teachers to be helpful and supportive. On the other hand, a recurring complaint regarding the book selection was that the texts were not engaging and students were not able to connect with the content. There generally was a positive student response to the collaboration between the history and English teachers on units, homework, and projects. At the same time, some students called for even greater connection between the English and history classes, as well as smaller class sizes.

When asked what they needed to help them be more successful, students indicated they would like more help with essay writing, especially via increased feedback from teachers during the writing process and a clearer explanation of grade decisions. Many reported they needed “more help and clarification from [the] teachers when it comes down to earned honors credit assessments and projects,” as well as more time to complete the assigned projects and papers.

A small number of students expressed concern over the earned honors credit requirements. They stated this model took up a lot of course time and tended to control the pace of the course.

Additional Focus Groups Conducted by AIR

American Institutes for Research (AIR) held a series of focus groups with a small group of students and parents. Forty students were randomly selected to participate in the focus groups, of which only ten (n=10) participated. Ninety parents were randomly selected and called on to participate. Of those ninety, 30 parents agreed to participate and only 19 parents attended the sessions. Due to poor attendance by both students and parents, the results from these focus groups are limited and not representative of our student and parent population as a whole. Students’ comments were related to motivation, effective effort, peer support and connection, academic rigor, and student support. Parents’ comments were related to their perception of student motivation, academic rigor, student support, benefits, and challenges.

Student Focus Groups

Students cited the high expectations of their parents, teachers and coaches as a strong motivator. They perceived that their teachers were placing a great deal of effort into their courses and this served as a motivator to students. Students also commented that some of the work seemed like “busy work” and served to reduce their motivation. In terms of effort, students’ comments suggested that some work called for more effort than other work. Some of the 10 students did not see the connection between times when they put in more effort and better grades. Students cited feeling comfortable in their class environments and able to speak up and ask for help as necessary. Some students reported they felt sufficiently challenged, and some of the 10 students said they could be pushed more to reach their potential. DBQs were cited as difficult. Students felt supported by their teachers and felt they knew where to go for help when needed. Students suggested the curriculum be more interactive and that more current literature be integrated into the curriculum. They also suggested that the quantity of the work be lessened to create more time for them to produce better work.

Parent Focus Groups

Parents cited their students' teachers as a main factor in their students' motivation. They felt that a positive relationship with their teachers was a motivator. Lower motivation from classmates was described as a main challenge to their students' motivation. Some parents felt assignments were sufficiently difficult and some wanted more rigor. A number of parents acknowledged that they did not have a full picture of the curriculum or how their child was being challenged. Some of the 19 parents noted they felt rigor varied across teachers. Most parents were aware and appreciative that academic supports existed and noted that their children used the supports to varying degrees. Parents seemed pleased with the amount of support their students received from their teacher. There were parents who wanted more specific feedback on writing assignments. Parents noted benefits of the earned honors model were that it gives more students access to the honors curriculum and encourages more diverse perspectives and discussions. Some of the 19 parents indicated that a large amount of time and effort is spent on the earned honors assessments. Parents made several suggestions, including requests for more communication about how students are being challenged and more information about how the freshman experience impacts a student's course trajectory throughout high school.

Summary

Classroom Observations

Students were observed reading, writing and interacting with the text a great deal of time. In both English and history classes, students were highly engaged, with a large percentage of students on task and participating on a regular basis.

An area for improvement is the need to make more connections between the English and history content. Rarely were connections observed between the two subjects; which corroborates what both English and history teachers stated in focus groups.

Some strategies for differentiating instruction could be implemented more frequently, including the use of more than one grouping strategy in a class period, the use of visual aids as a mode of presentation in conjunction with lecturing, and providing more choices for students in their assignments and tasks to help address different learning styles and different ways to approach learning. In addition, teachers could check for evidence of understanding more often.

There are limitations to the data collected in the classroom observations. The observations only covered 30 minutes of a 42 minute period, so it was not possible to observe what took place at the end of a class period. This time constraint also limited the observer's ability to see all of the grouping strategies implemented within a full class period. It is recommended future observations incorporate the end of a class period to view the frequency of exit slips and other strategies that may occur during the last 10 to 12 minutes of class.

Teacher Feedback

Overall, teachers feel that the humanities curriculum has some definite strengths, including the added rigor of the course, more opportunities to teach writing, and the ability for all students to access honors credit. Additionally, by the end of the year teachers agreed that students' sense of belonging and support were evident in their classrooms.

Teachers feel that the earned honors assessment model is complex. A concern of English teachers is the lack of time they have to grade, plan, meet with their partner, and meet with students. The teachers feel there should be fewer assessments and that the assessments should be common across the English and history departments. History teachers would like to see more writing and a wider range of writing formats added to the earned honors credit assessment.

There exists a healthy tension between wanting more time for collaboration and more time to deal with the workload of assessments. Professionally, teachers would like to have time to meet with each other to discuss and debrief how things are working in their respective classrooms. Teachers would like to have more discussions about what teaming with their partners should look like and how to better collaborate with their partners.

Student Feedback

In general, students reported being motivated to do well in their humanities classes and that they put a lot of effort into their classes overall, as well as into earning honors credit. Students reported exerting a lot of effort on the various benchmark assessments in English and history, but did not find those assessments too difficult. Students felt challenged by their humanities classes and felt their classes helped them improve in writing and research the most. When asked about additional support needed, students did indicate they would like more help with essay writing.

Students gave mixed reviews on how interesting and engaging they found the materials to be. They also gave mixed reviews on the level of collaboration between their history and English teachers. This is somewhat consistent with the feedback from the teachers. While the teachers discussed the need to better collaborate with their partners, there are some English-history teacher teams that have been paired together much longer than others which could partly explain the differences in the level of collaboration experienced by students.

As the evaluation of the restructured freshman experience begins in full in 2012-13, we anticipate reporting on a much broader range of data points and greater participation from various stakeholder groups.

Part II: WHAT IS CHANGING FOR NEXT YEAR?

Assessments for Earned Honors Credit

Next year our core model will remain the same to earn honors credit. To earn honors credit for a semester students will continue to do *all* of the following:

- Earn 320 of the possible 400 points on the earned honors credit assessments,
- Earn a C or higher on the semester exam, and
- Earn a C or higher for the semester.

We remain committed to the continuous improvement of the freshman humanities model. We also remain committed to developing clear pathways to advanced work. Now that we have completed a year of implementation it is time to refine and enhance our work. The modifications outlined below are informed by teacher and student feedback.

Based on student and teacher feedback, the reading competency assessment for earned honors credit will become a diagnostic assessment given at the start of the school year. This will allow teachers to utilize it as a formative tool to differentiate instruction. A process paper will replace the reading competency assessment for earned honors credit.

The most significant change to the earned honors credit assessments is in response to the need for more shared curricular experiences. Currently humanities teams collaborate on four research projects. Next year, in addition to the research projects, humanities teams will have combined writing prompts on the semester exams and a combined English and history on demand writing earned honors assessment first semester. These combined assessments will further solidify the English and history partnerships and build more direct connections into the humanities curriculum. Similar to last year students will complete 11 writing assessments towards earning honors credit.

Next year, the quarter projects will be renamed research assessments. This will help to clearly communicate to students the focus of this particular type of earned honors assessment. There will continue to be four research assessments during the course of the year.

Teachers agree to expand the feedback on the assessments for earned honors credit. This includes more formative feedback and summative feedback to students throughout the school year.

Teachers are working on re-sequencing the assessments for earned honors credit to incorporate more time to teach writing. A new sequence of assessments will be posted on the humanities website.

Table 4
Assessments for Earned Honors Credit 2012-13

1st Semester	
English	History
Research 1	
Research 2	
Free Response Process	Free Response On Demand
Combined Writing On Demand	
2nd Semester	
English	History
Analytic Paper 1	DBQ Matrix
Research 3	
Analytic Paper 2	DBQ
Research 4	

Working Together

Teachers expressed a need for more time to work together. Next school year, during Professional Development Mondays, teachers will work on curriculum, assessments, and instruction. They will continue to have a dedicated professional learning community to examine assessments and curriculum. In addition, there will be a professional development strand dedicated to humanities. During this time, teachers will focus on differentiating instruction and students who struggle. They will also share ideas for lessons and discuss engaging instructional approaches designed to get our most vulnerable students on track for success.

Professional Development

A cadre of humanities teachers will participate in Path training this summer. Path training is through Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). This training focuses on implementing writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading strategies in all classrooms. It promotes student achievement at the highest levels. English teachers will focus on critical reading for meaning that includes the following steps: plan for reading, pre-read, build vocabulary, interact with text, and extend beyond the text. History teachers will examine strategies for guiding students through rigorous curriculum, including techniques for teaching Cornell notes, interacting with text, reading for understanding, developing vocabulary, writing to learn, and oral performances.

Summer Projects

There are summer projects in place that will focus on developing differentiated instruction lessons aligned to the Common Core State Standards, rubric revision for clarity, development of formative assessments linked to the assessments for earned honors credit, and a review of the World History For Us All curriculum. These projects address the needs that emerged during the school year. For example, developing specific formative assessments linked to the assessments for earned honors credit will provide all humanities teachers with tools to make their instruction more responsive to student needs. There is also a summer curriculum project with a focus on sophomore English and alignment to the Common Core State Standards.