
Mixed-Level Freshman Humanities

Evaluation: Year One

Preliminary Results

2008-09

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Executive Summary

When the new model for Freshman Humanities was put into place, the administration directed that the course be evaluated over a three-year period. Based on this directive, an evaluation plan was developed around the overall goals of the new Freshman Humanities program: 1) to prepare more students, particularly students of color, to take honors level courses; and 2) to improve the achievement of all students in English and History. The plan includes the collection of formative and summative information for the purpose of monitoring program implementation, making programmatic improvements, and analyzing overall program effectiveness. The evaluation plan calls for:

- Collection of feedback from students, teachers, and department chairs using interviews, surveys and focus groups
- Analysis of student performance – EXPLORE-PLAN-ACT test data, course grades, common semester exams
- Comparison of demographics and performance to comparable prior and future cohorts.

This report provides preliminary data and should not be considered summative. It provides demographics for this first cohort experiencing the new Freshman Humanities program compared to previous similar cohort groups. Data from honors-only classes are also provided for comparison purposes. Two surveys were developed by teachers to collect feedback from students and faculty. Response rates were high for these surveys: 97 percent for the student survey and 90 percent for the faculty survey. Along with demographics and survey data, the report provides preliminary data on first semester grades and common semester exams. Two prior cohorts were identified to serve as comparison groups: the 2006-07 and 2007-08 freshman students in mixed-level and honors Humanities with similar EXPLORE test scores to the current Humanities cohort enrolled in the new Humanities program this school year.

This report is organized around ten objectives, six of which were identified in the Mixed-Level Study conducted in 2005 and updated in discussions with teachers and administrators. These objectives are listed below. A final section focuses on student/faculty satisfaction.

- Objective 1: exposing more students to Humanities honors level classes;
- Objective 2: increasing the numbers of under-represented students in Humanities honors level classes;
- Objective 3: increasing the diversity of views in Humanities classes;
- Objective 4: providing the same learning experience for Humanities students enrolled for regular or honors credit;
- Objective 5: switching levels easily from regular level to honors level credit within mixed-level Humanities classes;
- Objective 6: increasing intellectual rigor in Humanities classes;
- Objective 7: improving student achievement in Humanities classes;
- Objective 8: encouraging and explicitly teaching students how to become successful in English and History classes;
- Objective 9: increasing teachers' understanding and use of differentiated instruction; and
- Objective 10: increasing support structures to help students achieve.

Preliminary Findings

Overall, the data indicate encouraging results for the first year of the new Freshman mixed-level Humanities course. The demographic data indicate the program is meeting several of the objectives and students and faculty generally provided positive feedback with suggestions for improving the course as implementation continues into the second year.

- **Objective 1: Preparing Students for Honors Classes** - The numbers of students enrolled at the honors level in freshman Humanities has doubled compared to 2006-07 and 2007-08. Furthermore there are more students in mixed-level regular classes. This class exposes students to honors level curriculum and work; past experience indicates that many of these students who are exposed to an honors curriculum take honors courses in subsequent years.
- **Objective 2: Increasing the Numbers of Under-represented Students in Honors Freshman Humanities** - The mixed-level classes are more diverse compared to 2006-07 and 2007-08. The numbers of Hispanic and Black students have doubled; the number of low-income students has more than doubled.
- **Objective 3: Increasing Diversity of Student Views in Freshman Humanities** - Students and faculty survey responses indicate that teachers and students believe that the diversity of mixed-level classes exposes students to a wide range of views. Responses were higher for students in mixed-level classes than honors-only classes. Furthermore, comparable percentages of students in mixed-level and honors-only classes indicated that they contribute to class discussion.
- **Objective 4: Providing Same Learning Experience in Mixed-Level Regular and Honors Level Freshman Humanities** - The same honors-level curriculum is being provided to mixed-level regular, mixed-level honors, and honors-only Freshman Humanities classes. Students' survey responses for mixed-level and honors-only classes are fairly similar with respect to the amount of work assigned although the percentage reporting "moderate" or "large" is slightly smaller for History classes.
- **Objective 5: Switching Levels Easily** - About 14 percent of students moved from mixed-level regular to honors credit. Since no teacher change is necessary, these changes are easily accomplished. Only a handful of students moved from honors credit to regular credit in mixed-level classes.
- **Objective 6: Increasing Intellectual Rigor:** - As noted above, changes such as a common honors curriculum, common grading scales, and common semester exams speak to increasing rigor and consistency. When students were asked to rate the extent to which the Humanities course was challenging, responses of students at the mixed-level regular level, mixed-level honors level, and honors-only level were similar with the majority rating it "moderately challenging" or "very challenging." About a quarter of the students rated the course "slightly challenging." Open-ended responses should be reviewed by English and History faculty members and department chairs to better understand students' views of what they believe make a course challenging.
- **Objective 7: Increasing Student Achievement** - It is too early to determine growth in achievement. Grades are lower than for prior cohorts; however, the grading scales are different and more rigorous. Going forward, the 2008-09 grades should serve as a baseline and future grades should be analyzed for improvement. Other important indicators will be longitudinal growth on the ACT Assessment System (EXPLORE to PLAN to ACT).
- **Objective 8: Encouraging and Explicitly Teaching Students to become Successful** - Students in mixed-level and honors-only Humanities classes rated themselves high on motivation. However, faculty responses were lower for mixed-level regular, higher for mixed-level honors and even higher for honors-only students. There were also differences between teachers and students with respect to effort and preparedness. Teachers and administrators should review these

data and open-ended responses to examine belief systems and expectations both on the part of students and teachers. Students were also asked to rate the extent to which they improved in seven areas (effective effort, being responsible for your learning, working in groups, organization, reading, writing, and research) using a scale from “not at all” to “a great deal.” For all seven areas, more students in mixed-level Humanities indicated “very much” or “a great deal” compared to honors-only students.

- **Objective 9: Increasing Differentiated Instruction** - Teachers were provided with 11 days of workshops on differentiated instruction. Two-thirds of the teachers reported that the professional development activities were useful “somewhat,” “very much,” or “a great deal.” The data suggest more continued professional development is needed.
- **Objective 10: Increasing Support Structures** - Programs such as STAE, Project EXCEL, AVID, and Freshman Reading were modified in 2008-09 to provide help that was aligned with the Humanities curricula. Faculty responses about these programs suggest that more work needs to be done to align these programs so they can better assist students with their work in Humanities.
- **Satisfaction:** Overall, ratings of satisfaction with the course on a scale of “1” to “5” were similar for mixed-level (3.3) and honors-only students (3.5). These ratings are slightly above the midpoint.

Mixed-Level Freshman Humanities Evaluation: Year One *Preliminary Results*

Background

Mixed-level Humanities classes are comprised of students enrolled at the regular level and honors level. This model allows students to experience an honors level curriculum and then easily move up into honors level when they feel confident about doing the work without changing teachers. The new Humanities course has the following elements:

- A common honors-level curriculum (which is used in both mixed-level and honors-only classes)
- A common grading policy and grading scales
- Common semester exams
- Differentiated instruction
- Focused student supports

When the new model for Freshman Humanities was put into place, the administration directed that the course be evaluated over a three-year period. Based on this directive, an evaluation plan was developed around the overall goals of the new Freshman Humanities program: 1) to prepare more students, particularly students of color, to take honors level courses; and 2) to improve the achievement of all students in English and History. The plan includes the collection of formative and summative information for the purpose of monitoring program implementation, making programmatic improvements, and analyzing overall program effectiveness. The evaluation plan calls for:

- Collection of feedback from students, teachers, and department chairs using interviews, surveys and focus groups
- Analysis of student performance – EXPLORE-PLAN-ACT test data, course grades, common semester exams
- Comparison of demographics and performance to comparable prior and future cohorts

This report provides preliminary data and should not be considered summative. It provides demographics for this first cohort experiencing the new Freshman Humanities program compared to previous similar cohort groups. Data from honors-only classes are also provided for comparison purposes. Two surveys were developed by teachers to collect feedback from students and faculty. Response rates were high for these surveys: 97 percent for the student survey and 90 percent for the faculty survey. Along with demographics and survey data, the report provides preliminary data on first semester grades and common semester exams. Two prior cohorts were identified to serve as comparison groups: the 2006-07 and 2007-08 freshman students in mixed-level and honors Humanities with similar EXPLORE test scores to the current Humanities cohort enrolled in the new Humanities program this school year.

This report is organized around ten objectives, six of which were identified in the Mixed-Level Study conducted in 2005 and updated in discussions with teachers and administrators. These objectives are listed below. A final section focuses on student/faculty satisfaction.

- Objective 1: exposing more students to Humanities honors level classes;
- Objective 2: increasing the numbers of under-represented students in Humanities honors level classes;
- Objective 3: increasing the diversity of views in Humanities classes;
- Objective 4: providing the same learning experience for Humanities students enrolled for regular or honors credit;
- Objective 5: switching levels easily from regular level to honors level credit within mixed-level Humanities classes;
- Objective 6: increasing intellectual rigor in Humanities classes;

- Objective 7: improving student achievement in Humanities classes;
- Objective 8: encouraging and explicitly teaching students how to become successful in English and History classes;
- Objective 9: increasing teachers' understanding and use of differentiated instruction; and
- Objective 10: increasing support structures to help students achieve.

When summarizing the student survey data, students in mixed-level classes (whether enrolled for regular or honors level credit) are reported as a combined group since they responded similarly. Where differences occurred among students in mixed-level classes, they are noted. For the faculty survey, some items disaggregate the data for mixed-level regular, mixed-level honors and honors-only classes to highlight important differences.

Objective 1: Are we exposing more students to the Humanities honors level classes and preparing more students to take honors level classes in the future?

Overall, we are exposing and preparing more students for honors level classes.

- The number of students in mixed-level classes who are taking the course for honors credit has increased from 119 and 123 in 2006-07 and 2007-08, respectively, to 229 in 2008-09. (Numbers for English and History are slightly different but reflect the same overall picture.)
- The number of students in mixed-level Freshman Humanities enrolled for regular credit has more than doubled from 77 and 106 in 2006-07 and 2007-08, respectively, to 213 in 2008-09. The students are exposed to an honors curriculum and it is anticipated that many of these students will enroll in honors courses in subsequent school years.
- The number of students in honors-only classes has remained relatively stable with slight fluctuations from year to year. Enrollments have ranged from 190 in 2006-07 to 155 in 2007-08 to 177 students in 2008-09.

Objective 2: Are we increasing the numbers of under-represented students in honors Humanities classes?

We have increased the number of under-represented Black, Hispanic, and low-income students in honors Humanities classes.

- Using first semester enrollments, Table 1 shows that the total number of Black students at the honors level increased from 29 students in 2006-07 to 63 students in 2008-09.
- The total number of Hispanic students at the honors level increased from 13 students in 2006-07 to 28 students in 2008-09.
- The total number of low-income students at the honors level increased from 28 students in 2006-07 to 71 students in 2008-09.

Table 1. Freshman Humanities Demographic Summary

	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Mixed-level regular						
Black	31	40%	36	34%	112	53%
Hispanic	7	9%	15	14%	38	18%
Low-income	23	30%	27	26%	134	64%
<i>Total # students</i>	77		106		213	
Mixed-level honors						
Black	16	13%	33	27%	52	23%
Hispanic	9	8%	12	10%	22	10%
Low-income	17	14%	31	25%	57	25%
<i>Total # students</i>	119		123		229	
Honors-only						
Black	13	7%	11	7%	11	6%
Hispanic	4	2%	4	3%	6	3%
Low-income	11	6%	9	6%	14	8%
<i>Total # students</i>	190		155		177	
Total # Honors in Humanities						
Black	29	9%	44	16%	63	16%
Hispanic	13	4%	16	6%	28	7%
Low-income	28	9%	40	14%	71	17%
<i>Total # students</i>	309		278		406	

Objective 3: Are we increasing the diversity of student views in the Freshman Humanities course?

We are increasing the diversity of student views, especially in the mixed-level Freshman Humanities classes. Several items on the faculty and student surveys were used to examine this objective. The items and percentages of student/faculty responses relating to diversity of students' views are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2. Diversity of Student Views

<i>Student Survey item</i>	Not at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very much	A great deal
How much does the diversity of students in your Humanities class expose you to a wide range of views?					
Mixed-level (n=412)	9%	17%	39%	24%	11%
Honors-only (n=169)	27%	40%	25%	6%	2%
Faculty Survey Item	Not at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very much	A great deal
How much does the diversity of students in mixed-level classes contribute to exposing students to a wide range of views? (n=17)	0%	0%	47%	47%	6%

- The data suggest that more students in mixed-level classes than honors-only classes feel that the diversity of the class exposes them to a wide range of views. This question should be analyzed over time to see if there are changes in student views.

- The data suggest that the majority of faculty feel that the diversity of students in mixed-level classes contributes “somewhat” or “very much” to a wide range of views.

A related question asked students about class discussion. Results are shown below in Table 3.

Table 3. Class Discussion

Student Survey	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	All of the time
How often do you contribute to the class discussion in your English or History class?					
English class					
Mixed-level (n=420)	2%	14%	37%	28%	19%
Honors-only (n=171)	1%	9%	33%	39%	19%
History class					
Mixed-level (n=416)	2%	17%	30%	32%	19%
Honors-only (n=169)	1%	9%	31%	36%	23%

- About 50 percent of the students in mixed-level classes, and about 60 percent of students in honors-only classes report that they contribute to class discussion “most of the time” or “all of the time.” In addition, approximately one-third of students responded “sometimes” to this item.

Objective 4: Are we providing the same learning experience for students whether enrolled for regular or honors credit?

The new Freshman Humanities course provides the same honors level curriculum to the mixed-level classes as well as the honors-only classes. A review of the curricula for the Freshman Humanities program substantiates this focus. A related survey question asked students to rate the amount of work assigned in their course. Table 4 shows the responses.

Table 4. Amount of Work

	Very little work	Some work	A moderate amount of work	A large amount of work
How would you rate the amount of work that was assigned in your course?				
English				
Mixed-level (n=417)	1%	8%	58%	33%
Honors-only (n=169)	1%	9%	60%	31%
History				
Mixed-level (n=408)	1%	16%	58%	25%
Honors-only (n=169)	1%	27%	52%	20%

- The data suggest that students in both mixed-level and honors-only English and History classes respond similarly with 91 percent of students responding either “moderate” or “large” amount of work in English and 72 to 83 percent responding “moderate” or “large” amount of work in History. The students in mixed-level English classes responded similar to students in honors-only English classes with 91 percent of students reporting either “moderate” or “large” amount of work. For History, a larger percentage of students in mixed-level classes (83%) than honors-only classes (72%) reported “moderate” or “large” amount of work.

Objective 5: Are students able to switch between mixed-level regular and mixed-level honors level credit?

Approximately 30 students, as reported by both students and faculty in survey items, moved from mixed-level regular credit to mixed-level honors credit during the 2008-09 school year. Only four students reported moving from mixed-level honors credit to mixed-level regular credit.

Objective 6: Are we increasing the intellectual rigor of the course experience?

There have been changes this year in the Freshman Humanities course (as documented in the curriculum) that suggest an increase in intellectual rigor. For example,

- a common honors curriculum provided to all students whether in enrolled in mixed-level or honors-only classes;
- common grading criteria and common scales for regular and honors levels; and
- administration of common semester exams for the Humanities courses.

One measure of rigor is the level of challenge in the assigned reading. Comparison of the English texts in the Freshman Humanities course to 16 other suburban area high schools indicates that ETHS uses comparable texts. Appendix A lists all of the English texts used in these 16 representative districts. Texts that are used in 5 or more districts are highlighted. Three of these texts, Romeo and Juliet, A Raisin in the Sun, and The Odyssey are texts that students read in Freshman Humanities English classes at ETHS.

Several student and faculty survey items relate to the issue of rigor. Table 5 summarizes these items.

Table 5. Rigor

Student Survey	Not at all challenging	Slightly challenging	Moderately challenging	Very challenging	Extremely challenging
How challenging was this course for you?					
English					
Mixed-level (n=420)	8%	26%	52%	11%	3%
Honors-only (n=168)	6%	22%	54%	15%	3%
History					
Mixed-level (n=421)	10%	27%	48%	13%	2%
Honors-only (n=169)	8%	28%	51%	11%	2%

- The majority of students in mixed-level classes report their class was “moderately challenging” or “very challenging;” about a third of the students report that they feel the class is “slightly challenging” or “not at all challenging.” These percentages are similar to students’ responses in Humanities honors-only classes.
- For students who responded that the course was less challenging than expected, typical responses included: (Responses were similar for students in mixed-level honors and honors-only classes.)
 - *“I was prepared.”*
 - *“Not as much homework/classwork as I expected.”*
 - *“I thought the quizzes and test would be much harder.”*
- For students who responded that the course was more challenging than expected, typical explanations included: (Responses were similar for students in mixed-level honors and honors-only classes.)
 - *“...because I get a lot of homework and we have too much work to do.”*
 - *“There were books that were really hard to understand what was going on.”*
 - *“This course asks me to use my critical thinking skills, which I haven’t practiced all that much before.”*

Objective 7: Are we increasing the level of student achievement?

Several sources of data were used to provide information on student achievement in the Humanities course including grades, results from the common semester exam, and selected student survey items.

Grades

Compared to past years, we expected to see a difference in grades due to the following factors:

- With the new curriculum in 2008-09, students in the regular-level classes are now taught the same curriculum that students in the honors level classes receive. This adds to the rigor of the course.
- Unlike past years, the Freshman Humanities classes now have a common exam, which is reflected in the semester grade.
- In addition, there are now common grading scales for Humanities classes.
- The number of students in the mixed-level classes has more than doubled. More students are now exposed to the honors curriculum, and more students have the option of moving up from a regular-level course to an honors-level course. In the past, some of these students were placed in a course called Freshman Humanities Level 2 (regular level).

Criteria for placement into the Freshman mixed-level and honors-only Humanities courses are based in part on students' EXPLORE Reading and MAP scores. This is different than years past where placement was based on a combined EXPLORE Reading and English score, and a MAP score was not part of the placement criteria. To create comparison groups from past freshman cohorts, we have identified students who were in regular level and honors level courses whose EXPLORE Reading scores meet the current placement criteria, listed below:

- Students with EXPLORE Reading scores between 40 and 69 percentile are placed in mixed-level regular classes (EN4012 and HS4012).
- Students with EXPLORE Reading scores between 70 and 94 percentile are placed in mixed-level honors classes (EN4013 and HS4013).
- Students whose EXPLORE Reading scores are at the 95th percentile or above are placed in honors-only classes (EN0003 and HS5003).

Tables 6 and 7 show grades for the current Freshman Humanities mixed-level course along with comparable cohort groups from 2006-07 and 2007-08.

Table 6. Semester Grades - English

	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Mixed-level Regular (EN4012/EN0002)						
A/B	62	47%	60	45%	32	27%
C	45	34%	38	28%	41	34%
D/F/NC	25	19%	36	27%	47	40%
Total	132		134		120	
Mixed-Level Honors (EN4013)						
A/B	81	88%	72	85%	125	76%
C	7	8%	9	11%	22	13%
D/F/NC	4	4%	4	5%	17	11%
Total	92		85		164	

Table 7. Semester Grades - History

	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Mixed-level Regular (HS4012/HS5002)						
A/B	59	44%	64	48%	43	35%
C	43	32%	47	35%	37	30%
D/F/NC	31	23%	22	17%	44	35%
Total	133		133		124	
Mixed-Level Honors (HS4013)						
A/B	78	86%	72	87%	118	72%
C	11	12%	9	11%	34	21%
D/F/NC	2	2%	2	2%	12	7%
Total	91		83		164	

- The data show an increase in D, F, and NC grades in 2008-09 and a decrease in A and B grades across all levels of the Freshman Humanities course. In this baseline year of the new curriculum, a change in grade distribution was expected and is believed to be an indication of the more rigorous coursework and of more consistent grading practices. The pattern should be reviewed with teachers to determine if changes are needed in coursework or grading.

Common Exam

In the 2008-09 school year, common assessment exams were administered to students in Freshman Humanities English and History classes. These exams included both a multiple-choice test and an essay test. For the multiple choice portion, the departments utilized a new software program which allowed teachers to scan and grade the multiple choice exam and analyze the scores in a variety of ways, including using general item analyses and item analyses by concepts/skill areas. The teachers in both the English and History departments were able to use the item analyses to review items to determine areas of strength and weakness as well as to review item statistics (distribution of scores, reliability coefficients, etc.). The item analyses provided a means for teachers to look at incorrect responses to understand students' misconceptions. The overall average score for the multiple-choice portion of the English common exam

was 75%. The overall average score for the multiple-choice portion of the History common exam was 70%.

Objective 8: Are we encouraging and explicitly teaching students how to become successful in English and History classes?

Several student and faculty survey items focused on motivation, effective effort, and helpful strategies for students. Table 8 summarizes these results.

Table 8. Motivation, Effective Effort, and Strategies

Student Survey	Not at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very much	A great deal	
To what extent have you improved in the following areas:						
Effective effort						
Mixed-level (n=423)	4%	8%	42%	29%	17%	
Honors-only (n=169)	7%	14%	45%	23%	11%	
Being responsible for your learning						
Mixed-level (n=422)	2%	9%	27%	34%	28%	
Honors-only (n=170)	6%	9%	36%	35%	14%	
Working in groups						
Mixed-level (n=423)	2%	7%	29%	34%	28%	
Honors-only (n=169)	4%	18%	36%	30%	12%	
Organization						
Mixed-level (n=422)	7%	12%	29%	30%	22%	
Honors-only (n=170)	13%	16%	35%	22%	14%	
Reading						
Mixed-level (n=421)	5%	9%	27%	33%	26%	
Honors-only (n=170)	8%	13%	39%	29%	11%	
Writing						
Mixed-level (n=422)	1%	8%	28%	34%	29%	
Honors-only (n=169)	3%	7%	35%	37%	18%	
Research						
Mixed-level (n=421)	5%	10%	32%	35%	19%	
Honors-only (n=166)	9%	11%	37%	31%	12%	
	1 - Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5 - Strongly Agree	Avg.
I am motivated to do well in my...						
English class						
Mixed-level (n=423)	3%	5%	16%	27%	49%	4.2
Honors-only (n=171)	1%	5%	10%	37%	47%	4.2
History class						
Mixed-level (n=423)	3%	5%	16%	29%	47%	4.1
Honors-only (n=171)	2%	4%	15%	30%	49%	4.2
How would you rate the effort you put forth for this class?	None at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very much	A great deal	
English						
Mixed-level (n=420)	0%	7%	31%	41%	21%	
Honors-only (n=168)	1%	2%	25%	50%	22%	
History						
Mixed-level (n=420)	1%	7%	32%	41%	20%	
Honors-only (n=169)	0%	3%	34%	45%	18%	
Faculty Survey						
How motivated are your...	Not at all motivated	Not too motivated	Somewhat motivated	Very motivated	Extremely motivated	
Mixed-level regular students (n=17)	0%	24%	71%	6%	0%	
Mixed-level honors students (n=17)	0%	6%	24%	71%	0%	
Honors-only students (n=11)	0%	0%	0%	46%	54%	
How would you describe the effort put forth by your...	None at all	Not too much	Somewhat	Very much	A great deal	
Mixed-level regular students (n=16)	0%	19%	44%	31%	6%	
Mixed-level honors students (n=16)	0%	0%	19%	62%	19%	
Honors-only students (n=10)	0%	0%	0%	30%	70%	
	Not at all prepared	Not too prepared	Somewhat prepared	Very prepared	Extremely prepared	
How would you describe how prepared your students are?						
Mixed-level regular students (n=17)	0%	30%	59%	12%	0%	
Mixed-level honors students (n=17)	0%	0%	59%	41%	0%	
Honors-only students (n=11)	0%	0%	9%	36%	55%	

- Students were asked to rate the extent to which they improved in seven areas using a scale ranging from “not at all” to “a great deal.” For all seven areas, more students in mixed-level Humanities indicated “very much” or “a great deal” compared to honors-only students. Furthermore, about 60 percent or more students in mixed-level classes selected “very much” and “a great deal” with respect to:
 - being responsible for your learning
 - working in groups
 - reading
 - writing
- When students were asked to rate their motivation to do well on a scale where “1” represents “strongly disagree” and “5” represents “strongly agree,” students in mixed-level Humanities classes gave an average rating of 4.1 in English and History. These average ratings were equivalent to those of honors-only students.
- When faculty members were asked to rate their students’ motivation on a 5-point scale where “1” represents “not at all motivated” and “5” represents “extremely motivated,” the percentages fell along a continuum. Of the students in mixed-level regular, 71 percent were described as “somewhat motivated.” For the mixed-level honors students, 71 percent were described as “very motivated,” and for honors-only students, 46 percent were described as “very motivated” and the remaining 54 percent described as “extremely motivated.” It is interesting that student and faculty views of motivation differ.
- Students and faculty were asked to respond to an item about effort. The pattern of student responses differed from faculty responses. About 60 percent or more of students in mixed-level classes responded “very much” or “a great deal.” About 90 percent or more of students responded “somewhat,” “very much” or “a great deal.” Teachers’ responses, on the other hand, followed a pattern where the amount of effort as represented by “very much” or “a great deal” increased from mixed-level regular students (37%) to mixed-level honors students (81%) to honors-only students (100%). A similar pattern also occurs for the faculty survey item relating to student preparedness.

Objective 9: Are we increasing teacher understanding and use of differentiated instruction?

During the 2008-09 year, teachers participated in 11 days of workshops on differentiated instruction with Jessica Hockett, a consultant on this topic. In addition, teachers were asked about their professional development experience on the faculty survey. Table 9 shown below indicates that 68 percent of teachers found professional development to be useful “somewhat,” “very much,” or “a great deal with the majority (56%) indicating “somewhat.” About 34 percent only found it “a little” or “not at all” useful. The literature on professional development indicates that implementing a new teaching practice takes time and embedded support. For this reason, literacy coaches and staff developers are included in the workshops and during the second half of the year, the teachers participated in lesson study which includes planning, observing and debriefing a lesson that models differentiated instruction. Some of the teachers’ comments reflect this perspective. Teachers’ responses also indicate that they would like more support in teaching mixed-level classes.

- *“It’s a process--learning to teach this way. The professional development has been good--especially the one on one conversations that I’ve had with the consultant.”*
- *“The differentiation has given teachers a blueprint, but finding time to thoroughly plan differentiated has been very difficult.”*
- *“<The consultant>is great, but a few sessions throughout the year is insufficient. Much more is needed.”*

Table 9. Professional Development

Faculty Survey	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much	A great deal
How useful has the professional development been for teaching mixed-level classes? (n=18)	6%	28%	56%	6%	6%
	1 - Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5 - Strongly Agree
I feel that I have enough support to teach mixed-level classes. (n=18)	0%	39%	39%	22%	0%

Teachers were also asked how they differentiate instruction. Typical comments are reflected below:

- *“Lots of grouping and regrouping; more scaffolding for students that need the extra steps. I also award points for evidence of effective effort--homework done on time, seeking extra help, attending AM support, etc. I use Moodle to post alternative methods of gathering information, such as PowerPoints, links to websites, etc to allow learners with different learning profiles to access material in their preferred way.”*
- *“Grouping based on interests, choice, and skills. Providing students with different options on projects and assignments--options target different skill levels.”*

Objective 10: Are we increasing support structures to help students achieve?

With the implementation of the new mixed-level Humanities program, several support structures were modified to help assist students. These supports include the Freshman Reading class, Project EXCEL, AVID, and STAE. In particular, these supports focused on the pre-teaching of key concepts, explicit teaching of strategies, lessons on effective effort, and other skills (time management) needed to be successful in school. The faculty survey included several items about these supports along with AM Support. Table 10 shows these results.

Table 10. Support Structures

Faculty Survey	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Very much	A great deal
To what extent do reading classes help the students in your Humanities class? (n=13)	0%	8%	31%	23%	38%
To what extent does AVID help the students in your Humanities class? (n=12)	8%	33%	25%	17%	25%
To what extent does EXCEL help the students in your Humanities class? (n=13)	9%	9%	55%	9%	18%
To what extent does STAE help the students in your Humanities class? (n=12)	8%	17%	42%	8%	25%
To what extent does AM Support help the students in your Humanities class? (n=18)	6%	22%	33%	22%	17%

- Responses suggest that the majority (61%) of teachers feel that the reading classes help students “very much” or “a great deal.” Responses (about 67%-82%) ranged across “somewhat,” “very much,” and “a great deal” with respect to AVID, EXCEL, and STAE.

How satisfied are students and faculty with the mixed-level Humanities course?

Students and faculty were also asked to rate the Humanities course with respect to satisfaction/effectiveness. Table 11 shows these results.

Table 11. Satisfaction

Student Survey	1 - Very dissatisfied	2	3	4	5 - Very Satisfied	Avg.
Rate your satisfaction with this course.						
Mixed-level (n=409)	8%	13%	34%	29%	16%	3.3
Honors-only (n=164)	2%	11%	26%	51%	10%	3.5
How satisfied are you with the level for which you are currently enrolled?	1 - Very dissatisfied	2	3	4	5 - Very Satisfied	Avg.
English class						
Mixed-level (n=419)	3%	10%	21%	34%	32%	3.8
Honors-only (n=166)	2%	3%	7%	19%	69%	4.5
History class						
Mixed-level (n=421)	3%	9%	23%	33%	33%	3.8
Honors-only (n=167)	2%	2%	10%	19%	68%	4.5
Faculty Survey	Not at all effective	Not too effective	Somewhat effective	Very Effective	Extremely effective	
After one year of implementation, how effective do you think this mixed-level model is for meeting your students' instructional needs? (n=18)						
	0%	6%	72%	22%	0%	
	Less	Same	More			
Compared to teaching classes that are more homogeneous, I like teaching mixed-level classes... (n=17)						
	0%	41%	59%			

Students

- On a five-point scale where “1” represented “very dissatisfied” and “5” represented “very satisfied,” mixed-level students’ average rating was 3.3 and honors-only students’ rating was 3.5. Students were also asked “How satisfied are you with the level for which you are currently enrolled?” The average rating for students in mixed-level classes was about 3.8; the average rating for honors-only students, 4.5, was higher than students in mixed-level. Students in mixed-level honors classes gave a higher rating (4.0) than students in mixed-level regular classes (3.6).
- When asked an open-ended question about the strengths of the mixed-level classes, the following comments were typical responses:
 - “Everything that we are taught in our English class always somehow connects to our history class.”
 - “Class discussions, and adding different points of view to discussion.”
 - “Reading, writing and analyzing things and contributing things.”
- When asked how the mixed-level Humanities classes could be improved, the following comments were typical responses:
 - “I would change the texts we read.”
 - “Making it harder and more interesting. Also, actually getting work back would be great.”
 - “The amount of work/homework.”

- Students were also asked what additional supports would be helpful. Typical responses were:
 - *“Extra help from the teachers and coming to AM support when I need help.”*
 - *“More homework help.”*
 - *“I think I should just make sure I get all my projects and homework assignments.”*
 - *“I don’t need much help, just more focused discussions.”*

Faculty

- The majority (94%) of faculty felt that the mixed-level model is “somewhat effective” or “very effective” (scale ranges from “not at all effective” to “extremely effective”) for meeting students’ needs.
- When asked about the strengths of the mixed-level classes, the following comments were typical responses:
 - *“There are a range of students in the class and the students who are regular and are on the cusp of making honors are able to work with honors students and they are also pushed a little harder to do the same quality of work as a student labeled ‘honors’.”*
 - *“The strengths of the program are many. The connections between English and history are too numerous to mention. This program is right in the idea that we are doing something to equally educate all students. With the levels of planning that we have done so far, this class gives each student a fair starting place that gets them ready to succeed here at ETHS regardless of whence they came. It really is a launching pad for our students as they develop their own identities.”*
- When asked about how the mixed-level classes could be improved, the following comments were typical responses:
 - *“Keep going. Try making it a better year. We had a new curriculum on top of the teaching of mixed abilities. This is a lot of change in one year. We’ve learned from this experience, and hopefully we can reflect on and grow based on what we now know. It should be easier to move students from level 2 to enriched.”*
 - *“Unfortunately, the new formula for “mixing” the students is not as effective for any of the students as the old formula was. We have increased the number of 2 level students in the class, but haven’t added the same number of honors students.”*
- Faculty like teaching mixed-level classes: 41 percent like it the same as teaching homogeneous classes and 59 percent like it more than teaching homogeneous classes.
- Faculty responses suggest mixed views about the placement criteria for mixed-level Humanities classes. About half believe students are appropriately placed. For those that do not agree, open-ended comments relating to this item do not reflect any one reason for why they believe they are not placed appropriately.

Preliminary Findings

Overall, the data indicate encouraging results for the first year of the new Freshman mixed-level Humanities course. The demographic data indicate the program is meeting several of the objectives and students and faculty generally provided positive feedback with suggestions for improving the course as implementation continues into the second year.

- **Objective 1: Preparing Students for Honors Classes** - The numbers of students enrolled at the honors level in freshman Humanities has doubled compared to 2006-07 and 2007-08. Furthermore, there are more students in mixed-level regular classes. This class exposes students to honors level curriculum and work; past experience indicates that many of these students who are exposed to an honors curriculum take honors courses in subsequent years.
- **Objective 2: Increasing the Numbers of Under-Represented Students in Honors Freshman Humanities** - The mixed-level classes are more diverse compared to 2006-07 and 2007-08. The numbers of Hispanic and Black students have doubled; the number of low-income students has more than doubled.
- **Objective 3: Increasing Diversity of Student Views in Freshman Humanities** - Students and faculty survey responses indicate that teachers and students believe that the diversity of mixed-level classes exposes students to a wide range of views. Responses were higher for students in mixed-level classes than honors-only classes. Furthermore, comparable percentages of students in mixed-level and honors-only classes indicated that they contribute to class discussion.
- **Objective 4: Providing Same Learning Experience in Mixed-Level Regular and Honors Level Freshman Humanities** - The same honors-level curriculum is being provided to mixed-level regular, mixed-level honors, and honors-only Freshman Humanities classes. Students' survey responses for mixed-level and honors-only classes are fairly similar with respect to the amount of work assigned, although the percentage reporting "moderate" or "large" is slightly smaller for History classes.
- **Objective 5: Switching Levels Easily** - About 14 percent of students moved from mixed-level regular to honors credit. Since no teacher change is necessary, these changes are easily accomplished. Only a handful of students moved from honors credit to regular credit in mixed-level classes.
- **Objective 6: Increasing Intellectual Rigor** - As noted above, changes such as a common honors curriculum, common grading scales, and common semester exams speak to increasing rigor and consistency. When students were asked to rate the extent to which the Humanities course was challenging, responses of students at the mixed-level regular level, mixed-level honors level, and honors-only level were similar with the majority rating it "moderately challenging" or "very challenging." About a quarter of the students rated the course "slightly challenging." Open-ended responses should be reviewed by English and History faculty members and department chairs to better understand students' views of what they believe make a course challenging.
- **Objective 7: Increasing Student Achievement** - It is too early to determine growth in achievement. Grades are lower than for prior cohorts; however, the grading scales are different and more rigorous. Going forward, the 2008-09 grades should serve as a baseline and future grades should be analyzed for improvement. Other important indicators will be longitudinal growth on the ACT Assessment System (EXPLORE to PLAN to ACT).
- **Objective 8: Encouraging and Explicitly Teaching Students to Become Successful** - Students in mixed-level and honors-only Humanities classes rated themselves high on motivation. However, faculty responses were lower for mixed-level regular, higher for mixed-level honors and even higher for honors-only students. There were also differences between teachers and students with respect to effort and preparedness. Teachers and administrators should review these

data and open-ended responses to examine belief systems and expectations both on the part of students and teachers. Students were also asked to rate the extent to which they improved in seven areas (effective effort, being responsible for your learning, working in groups, organization, reading, writing, and research) using a scale from “not at all” to “a great deal.” For all seven areas, more students in mixed-level Humanities indicated “very much” or “a great deal” compared to honors-only students.

- **Objective 9: Increasing Differentiated Instruction** - Teachers were provided with 11 days of workshops on differentiated instruction. Two-thirds of the teachers reported that the professional development activities were useful “somewhat,” “very much,” or “a great deal.” The data suggest more continued professional development is needed.
- **Objective 10: Increasing Support Structures** - Programs such as STAE, Project EXCEL, AVID, and Freshman Reading were modified in 2008-09 to provide help that was aligned with the Humanities curricula. Faculty responses about these programs suggest that more work needs to be done to align these programs so they can better assist students with their work in Humanities.
- **Satisfaction:** Overall, ratings of satisfaction with the course on a scale of “1” to “5” were similar for mixed-level (3.3) and honors-only students (3.5).

Appendix A

A Lesson Before Dying
A Midsummer Night's Dream
A Separate Peace
A Tale of Two Cities
A Thousand Splendid Suns
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
Ali and Nino
All Quiet on the Western Front
American Born Chinese
Animal Farm
Antigone
Beowulf
Black Boy
Bless Me Ultima
Brave New World
Catcher in the Rye
Dandelion Wine
Fahrenheit 451
Forgotten Fire
Free the Children
Gilgamesh
Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths
Hope in the Unseen
House on Mango Street
Island of Dr. Moreau
Jurassic Park
Lord of the Flies
Macbeth
Maus II
Midsummer Night's Dream
Mythology
Night
The Odyssey
Oedipus Rex
Of Mice and Men
One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich
Ordinary People
A Raisin in the Sun
Romeo and Juliet
Short Stories
Sidhartha
Speak
Stargirl
Sword and the Stone
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
The Alchemist
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
The Kiterunner
The Miracle Worker
The Penelopiad
Things Fall Apart
To Kill a Mockingbird
Twelve Angry Men
Zorro (Alende)