



Update on 9th Grade English Pilot Course

School Committee
February 29, 2024



Overview

Defining the Challenge

Why reimagine 9th grade?

Why a new English Course?

Understanding the Course

Next Steps



THE CHALLENGE

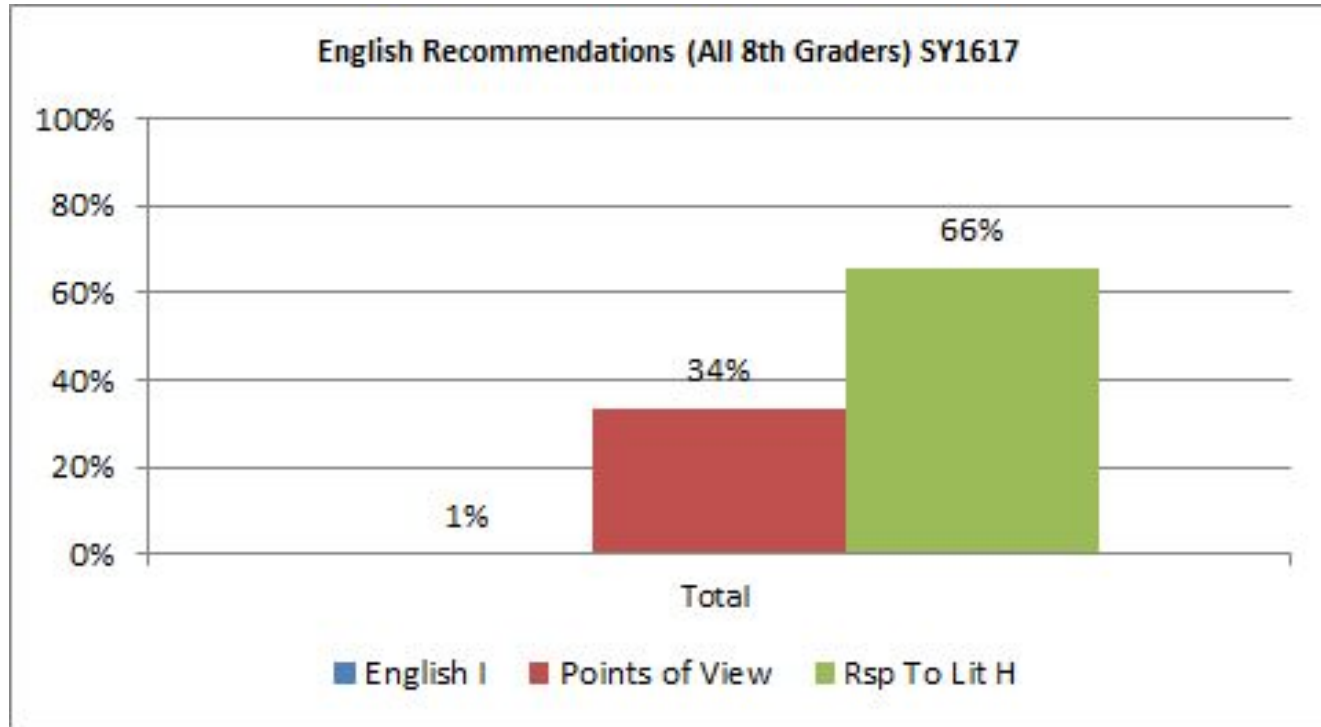
Ongoing and persistent disparities in course level enrollment by race and IEP status.



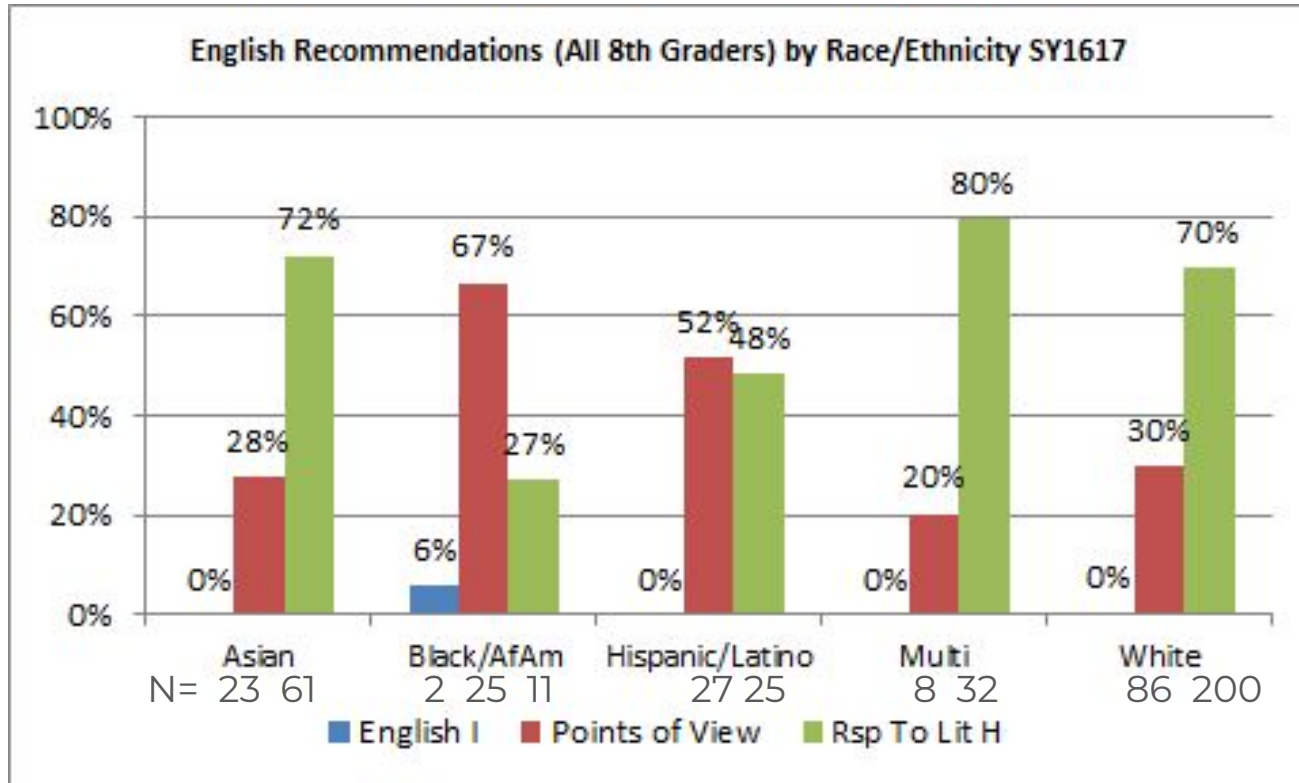
Historical Data

Originally presented to School Committee June 2017

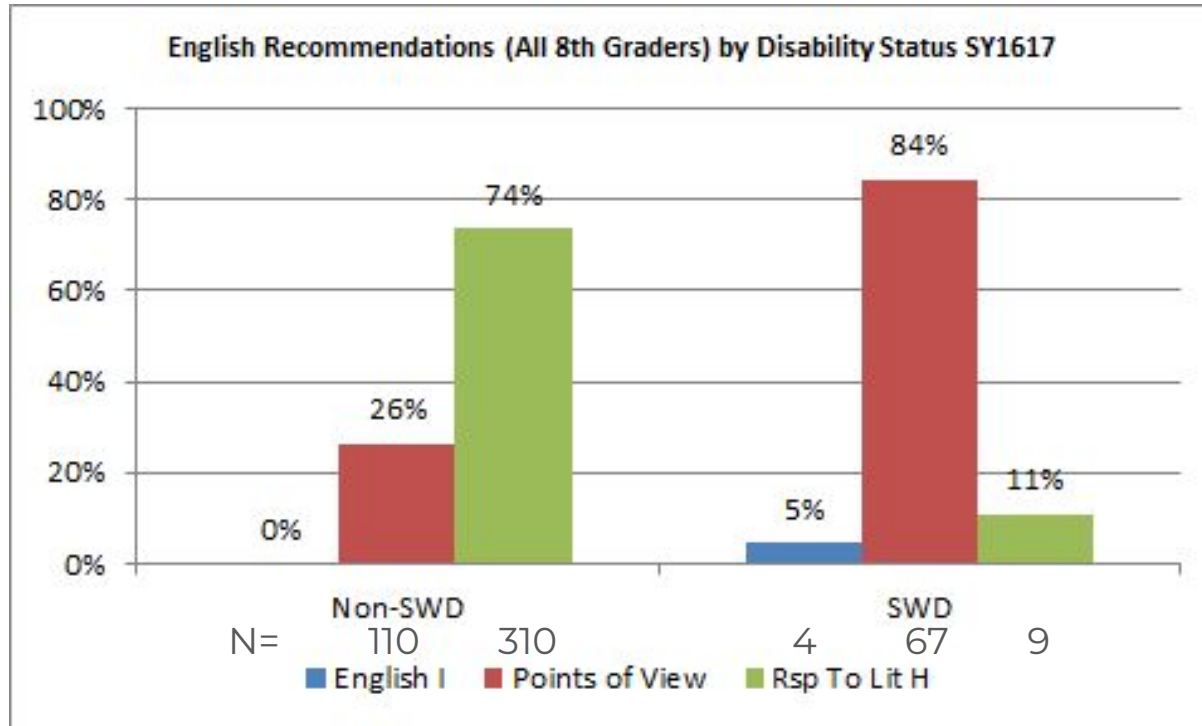
Grade 8: English Recommendations All Students



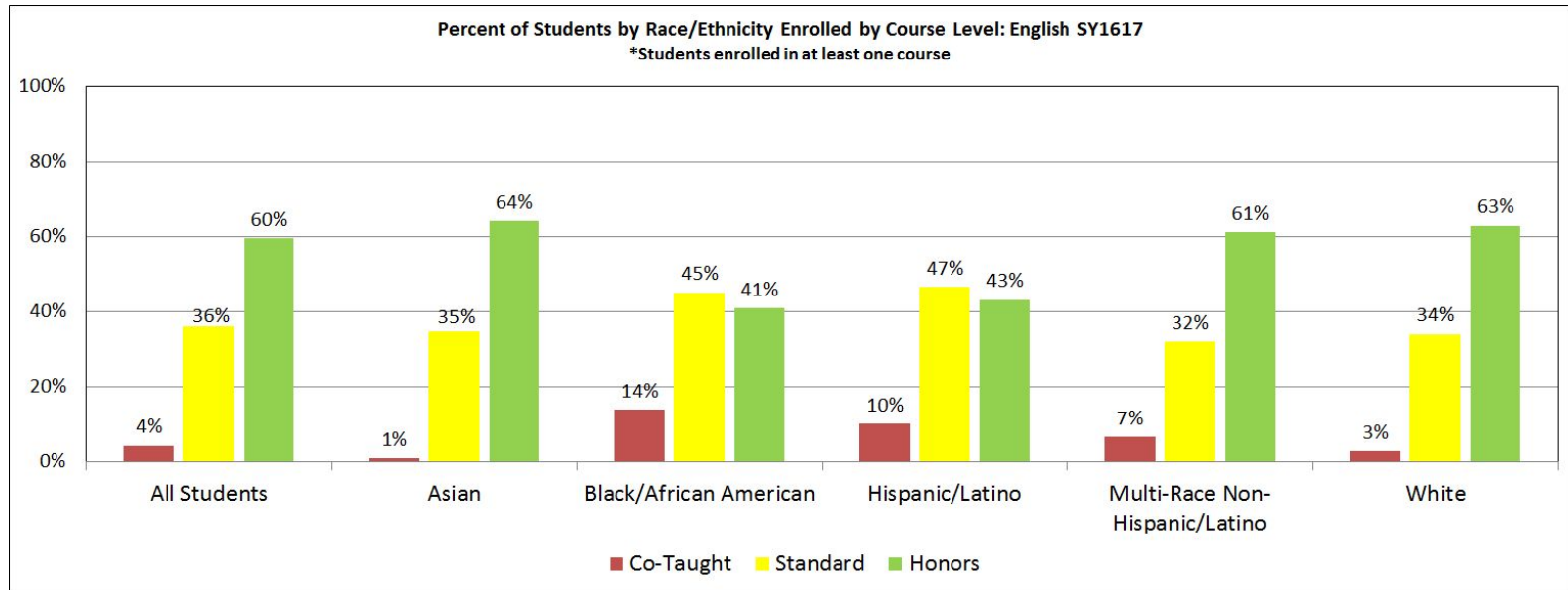
Grade 8: English Recommendations Race/Ethnicity



Grade 8: English Recommendations Disability Status



BHS English Course Enrollment - Race/Ethnicity (SY16-17)



	All Students	Asian	Black/African American	Hispanic/Latino	Multi-Race Non-Hispanic/Latino	White
Co-Taught	77	*	17	18	*	30
Standard	637	107	55	83	43	349
Honors	1,051	197	50	77	82	645

A photograph of a modern building with a large glass facade and a curved roof. The building is surrounded by trees and a sidewalk. The text "Current Course Enrollment" is overlaid on the image in a large, bold, black font.

Current Course Enrollment

9th Grade Student Population by Course Level

	College Prep	Honors
2022-2023	107 (24%)	335 (75%)

9th Grade Student Population by Course Level

	College Prep	Honors	Pilot
2022-2023	107 (24%)	335 (75%)	N/A
2023-2024	89 (16%)	330 (62%)	112 (21%)

Enrollment by Course and Race

Racial Group Distribution Across Courses

	College Prep 4 sections	Honors 13 sections	Pilot 5 sections
Asian 104	16 (15%)	69 (66%)	19 (18%)
Black 41	17 (41%)	8 (20%)	16 (39%)
Latinx 49	16 (33%)	24 (49%)	9 (18%)
Multiracial* 48	5 (10%)	33 (69%)	10 (21%)
White 298	42 (14%)	198 (66%)	58 (19%)
Totals 540	96	333	117

Enrollment by Course and Race

Racial Distribution in Courses

Total 9th Grade	College Prep 4 sections	Honors 13 sections	Pilot 5 sections
Asian 104 (19%)	16 (17%)	69 (21%)	19 (16%)
Black 41 (8%)	17 (18%)	8 (2%)	16 (14%)
Latine 49 (9%)	16 (17%)	24 (7%)	9 (8%)
Multiracial* 48 (9%)	5 (5%)	33 (10%)	10 (9%)
White 298 (55%)	42 (44%)	198 (60%)	58 (50%)
Totals 540 (100%)	96	333	117

23-24 9th Grade Course Level & IEP Status

Active IEP	
College Prep	41.5%
Honors	1.5%
Unleveled	18.75%

Hattie on Tracking (p. 186-187)

“Tracking has minimal effects on learning outcomes; no one profits.”

“The effects on equity outcomes are more profound and negative.”

Hattie, John *Visible Learning, the Sequel* (2023)



REIMAGINING 9th GRADE

Expanding access to our most rigorous course content.

Fostering a Sense of Community.

The Whys

- ❑ Ensuring access to the full BHS experience by delivering high quality, engaging courses for all students.
- ❑ Developing a healthy and integrated BHS community in students' first year.
- ❑ Diversifying our course enrollment demographics in grades 9, 10, 11, 12. BHS classrooms should reflect our student population.
- ❑ Guiding students toward more appropriate leveling decisions at BHS.

Prior Discussions of Course Levels and Racial Disparities

- ❑ **Students in MSAN to School Committee**
 - ❑ Jan 2017 - remediation and low expectations
 - ❑ Dec 2017 - visibility of racial disparities in classes
- ❑ **Course Level Enrollment**
 - ❑ Mar 2017 Superintendent Bott tasks principals with reviewing their processes to reduce disparities
 - ❑ June 2017 Superintendent Bott presents data to SC
- ❑ **Creation of WHISP 2019-2020 School Year**
- ❑ **SC Discussion of WHISP & Global Studies Jan 2022**
- ❑ **BHS SIP presentation** discussing reimagining 9th grade to full Committee and Curriculum Subcommittee Jan 2023
- ❑ **SC Vote for Pilot Course Jan 2023**
- ❑ **MacGarvie-Thompson Student Rep Presentation**
 - ❑ Jun 2023 identified continued disparities in recommendations and enrollment

**WE ASKED A FEW MSAN
STUDENTS:**

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN
YOU SEE THIS DATA?



Originally presented to School Committee December 2017



ALIGNMENT TO DISTRICT VISION AND GOALS

District Vision

Brookline provides every student with an extraordinary education, through enriching learning experiences and a supportive community, so that they may develop to their fullest potential.

District Goal 1: Joy in Learning

Our schools are dedicated to teaching students to be involved, active learners who work hard, think critically and creatively, and communicate effectively. **We emphasize high expectations for all students** and seek to **instill a lifelong joy in learning through a rich curriculum that will allow students to find and succeed at what they love**, and flourish in their lives.

District Goal 2: Excellence in Teaching

Passionate, knowledgeable, skillful teachers are the core strength of our schools. Our educators provide a dynamic and rewarding learning experience for students. We are committed to supporting a professional community that creates and sustains an atmosphere of intellectual excitement, **innovative instruction**, personal growth, and strong relationships between faculty and students.

District Goal 3: Culture of Collaboration

An extraordinary education requires the coordinated effort of many. Towards this end, we strive to solicit and foster collaboration between and among educators, administrators, community organizations, government institutions, private sector, and other interested parties, with the best interest of students serving as our guiding principle.

District Goal 4: Celebration of Difference

Brookline is presently and historically diverse. **We celebrate this diversity, and we commit to providing an education that authentically and deeply reflects the different perspectives, cultures, and experiences of our community.** We strive to include the full range of Brookline voices, not just in our academic curriculum but in all school-based activities.

District Goal 5: Commitment to Equity

We are committed to eliminating barriers to educational achievement in our schools. To this end, **we create policies and practices so that every student**, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status, experiences a safe and welcoming environment in our schools, and **receives the resources and support they need to take fullest advantage of the opportunities a Brookline education offers.** We recognize the existence of great disparities in private means among PSB students, and **will do everything possible to ensure that private resources do not determine student outcomes.**

District Goal 6: Ethic of Wellness

For our students and the world around them to thrive, our schools must contribute to an ethic of wellness. **PSB will attend to the social and emotional development of its students**, so that they may flourish personally, build positive relationships, and contribute to a more caring and just world. PSB will also teach and adopt sustainable practices, inspiring and empowering students to be good stewards of the Earth.

STRATEGIC PLAN

GOAL 1

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Increase achievement for all students by establishing, implementing, and regularly assessing a consistent, high quality, and challenging curriculum delivered using evidence based practices



Rui 2009 Meta Analysis

Creating a learning environment in which all students feel valued and treated as capable learners is the first step in institutionalizing a commitment to both high academic standards and equal educational opportunities. (pg. 181)

Ning Rui, 2009

Data scientist in Center for Research and Evaluation in Social Policy,
University of Pennsylvania

Source: Four decades of research on the effects of detracking reform: Where do we stand? (Rui, 2009)

Ning Rui 2009 Meta Analysis

Objective: To review and synthesize evidence about academic and non-academic effects of detracking reform.

Results:

- Students in detracked groups performed slightly better academically than their equivalent-ability peers in tracked groups (fixed effects model)
- **Average or high ability students** in detracked groups performed no differently than their equivalent-ability peers in tracked groups (random effects model)
- **Low-achieving students** both fixed effects and random effects revealed positive effects of detracking on student achievement

Conclusion:

Findings suggest that detracking had appreciable effects on low-ability student achievement and no effects on average and high-ability student achievement.



THE NEW COURSE

Core Concept & Design

Instructional Approach

Texts & Assignments

Results So Far

Unexpected Benefits



Course Concept & Design

Instruction, Assignments, Texts, Rigor

Goals for the Pilot

- Establish a new course, not a midpoint between College Prep and Honors
- Set students up for BHS success
- Create a strong entry point for all students
- Build 9th grade community
- Extend learning beyond the school walls
- Increase parent/caretaker involvement

Texts & Assignments

- Whole Class Texts
- Choice Texts
- Whole Class Writing Assignments

(Range of genres: personal narrative, analytical essays, poetry, creative writing, reflective writing)

- Some Writing Assignments that Offer Choice
(e.g. Storycorps Interview or Graphic Novel)

Texts

	Mild	Medium	Spicy
Quarter 1	31	61	19
Quarter 2	40	55	24

Sample Texts:

Mild: *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian, Messy Roots, A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*

Medium: *In the Time of the Butterflies, Crazy Rich Asians, When the Emperor Was Divine, The Other Americans*

Spicy: *The House of the Spirits, Pachinko, Crime and Punishment*

Hattie on Tracking (p. 186-187)

“Castejón and Zancajo (2015) noted a negative relationship between student motivation levels and the degree to which systems sort and group students into ability groups.”

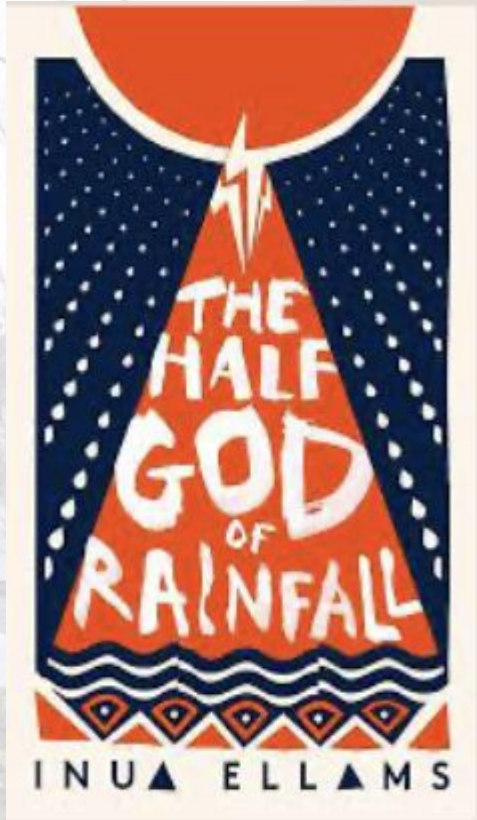
Hattie, John *Visible Learning, the Sequel* (2023)

Community Connections (linked to themes)

- American Repertory Theater performance
- Chinatown Historical Tour and Community Luncheon (Chinatown)
- Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Tour
- Food Truck Festival and Food Memoir Presentations
- Guest Authors/Poets (Spoken Word Poet “Lyrical Faith”)



Community Connections (linked to themes)



Parent/Caregiver Involvement

- Intro survey about their kid/goals
- Sign-off on book selection
- Sign-off on course selection
- Invitations to join trips (Chaperones!)
- Invitations to 10 minute meetings
- Invitations to community celebration
- Quarterly newsletter
- Midyear Survey
- End of year survey

Instructional Approach

- Each quarter's content is thematically paired with topics explored in WHISP (Power, Community, Wealth, Identity).
- Students have a mix of whole class assignments (required for all students) and options-based assignments (self-selected). These options may include texts, writing assignments, and homework.
- Students can move fluidly between options. Many students start with easier work and increase their challenge as the year goes on.
- Instruction takes a UDL approach, and is supported by training and observations by Landmark School Outreach consultants.
- Each unit has a connection to a community event: field trips, student exhibitions, and guest authors/poets.

Maintaining Rigor

- The Pilot includes whole-class instruction of canonical texts that are taught in 9th Grade Honors (*The Odyssey & Much Ado About Nothing*)
- The Pilot adds optional higher challenge texts that *go beyond* the length and lexile of our Honors classes.
(*The House of the Spirits, Pachinko, Crime and Punishment*)
- All 9th Grade classes have 12 drafted pieces of writing (scaffolded assignments with multiple drafts and revisions).
- All 9th grade classes include the same vocabulary and grammar standards.
- Students in all 9th grade English classes take a common midyear.
The 9th Grade team has been discussing a common final (June 2024).

Curriculum Matters

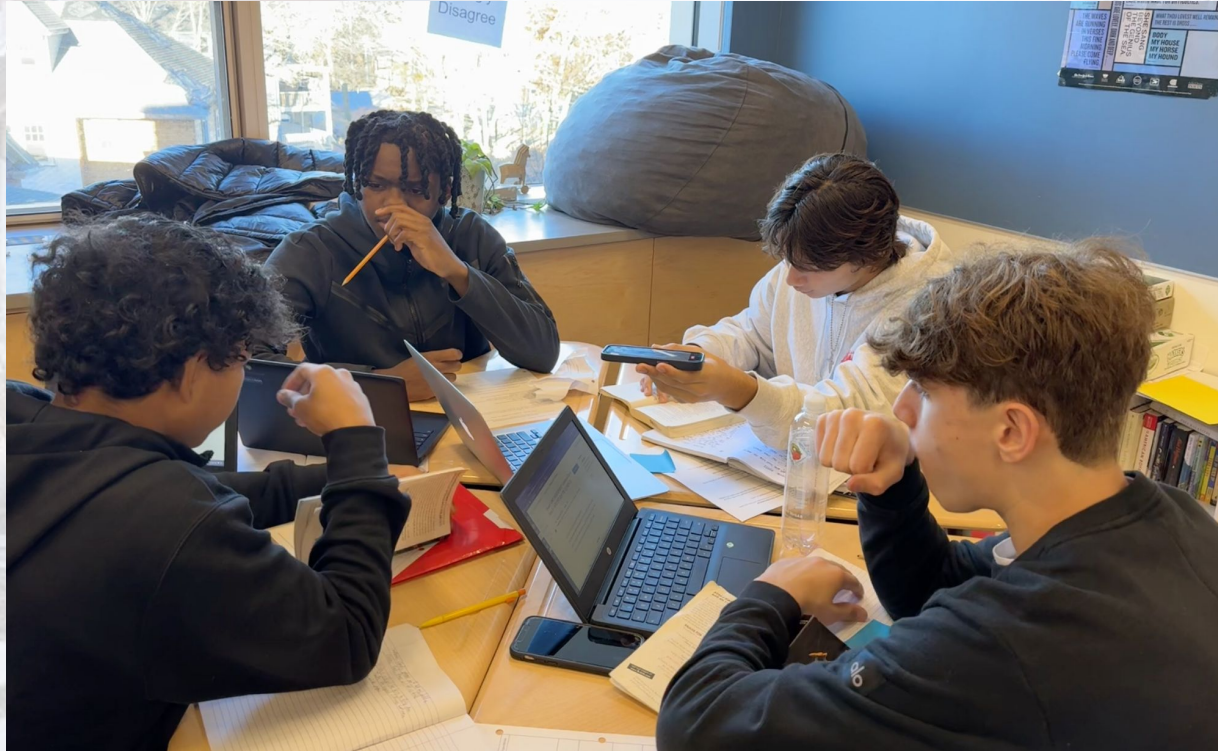
High school curriculum reflects 41 percent of the academic resources students bring to higher education; test scores, 30 percent; and class rank/academic GPA, 29 percent. **No matter how one divides the universe of students, the curriculum measure produces a higher percent earning bachelor's degrees than either of the other measures.**

The impact of a high school curriculum of high academic intensity and quality on degree completion is far more pronounced and positively-for African-American and Latino students than any other pre-college indicator of academic resources. The impact for African-American and Latino students is also much greater than it is for white students.

Source: Answers in the Toolbox Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns and Bachelor's Degree Attainment.

By Clifford Adelman
Office of Educational Research and Improvement U.S. Department of Education(1999)

Proven Protocols Work



Proven Protocols for English Instruction

Accessing & Teaching Shakespeare	Folger Library Shakespeare Model
Developing Solid Discussion Skills	Variations on Socratic Seminar
Tackling Complex Texts	Brown University's The Performance Cycle
Peer & Self Editing Skills	National Writing Project (NWP) Peer Review Process
Daily Journaling & Note taking 200+ handwritten pages/year	Mueller (Princeton) & Oppenheimer (UCLA) Notetaking Handwriting vs. Laptop Study

High Rigor, *High Support*

UDL Practices (Landmark-endorsed)

- Class agenda & objectives visible at all times
- Use of notebooks to organize and binders to organize class notes and handouts
- Schema activation activities for new texts
- Graphic organizers (optional to all students)
- Sentence frames and sentence starters (optional to all students)
- Use of planners and dedicated time to write down homework
- Models or student exemplars of all major assessments
- Use of rubrics on all assignments
- Opportunity for revision on major assignments
- Cuing the midpoint of in-class work
- Use of two-column note structure
- “Write to paper” to give students time to gather their thoughts



Understanding the Populations of the Levels

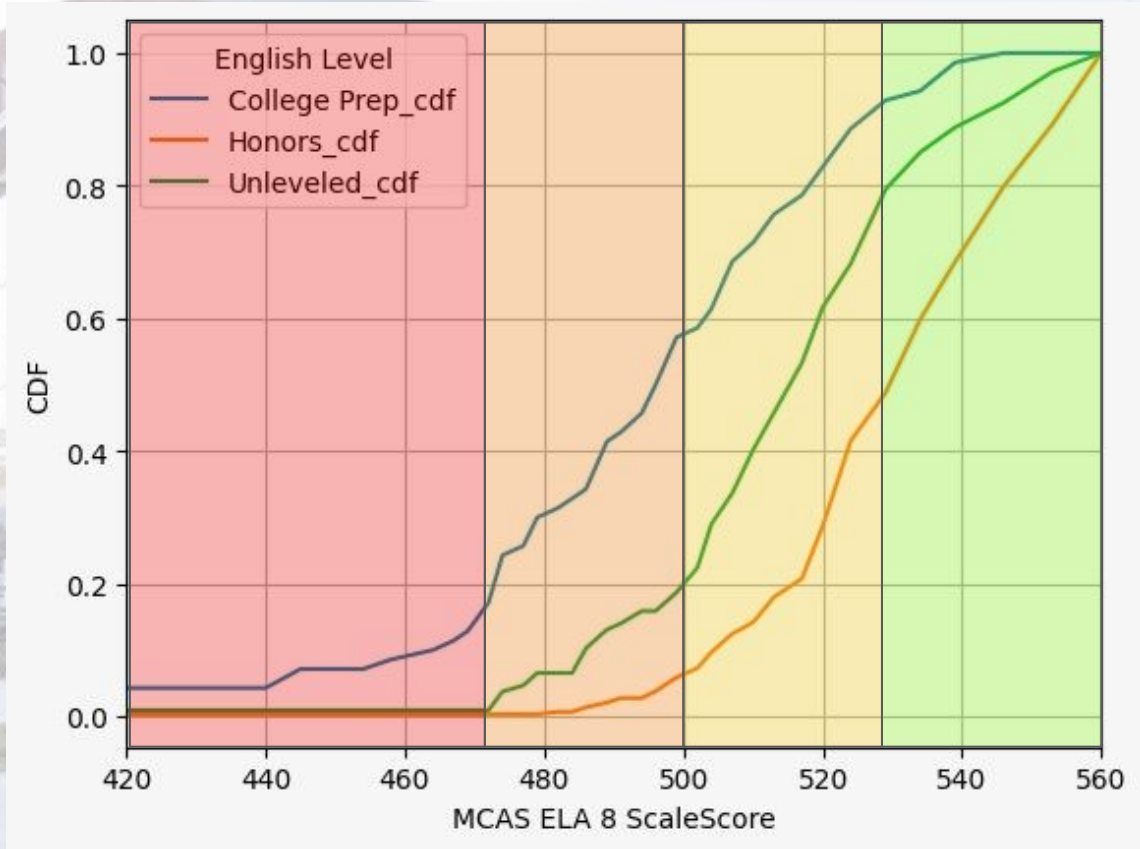
9th Grade Student Population by Course Level

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2023-2024	89 (16%)	330 (62%)	112 (21%)

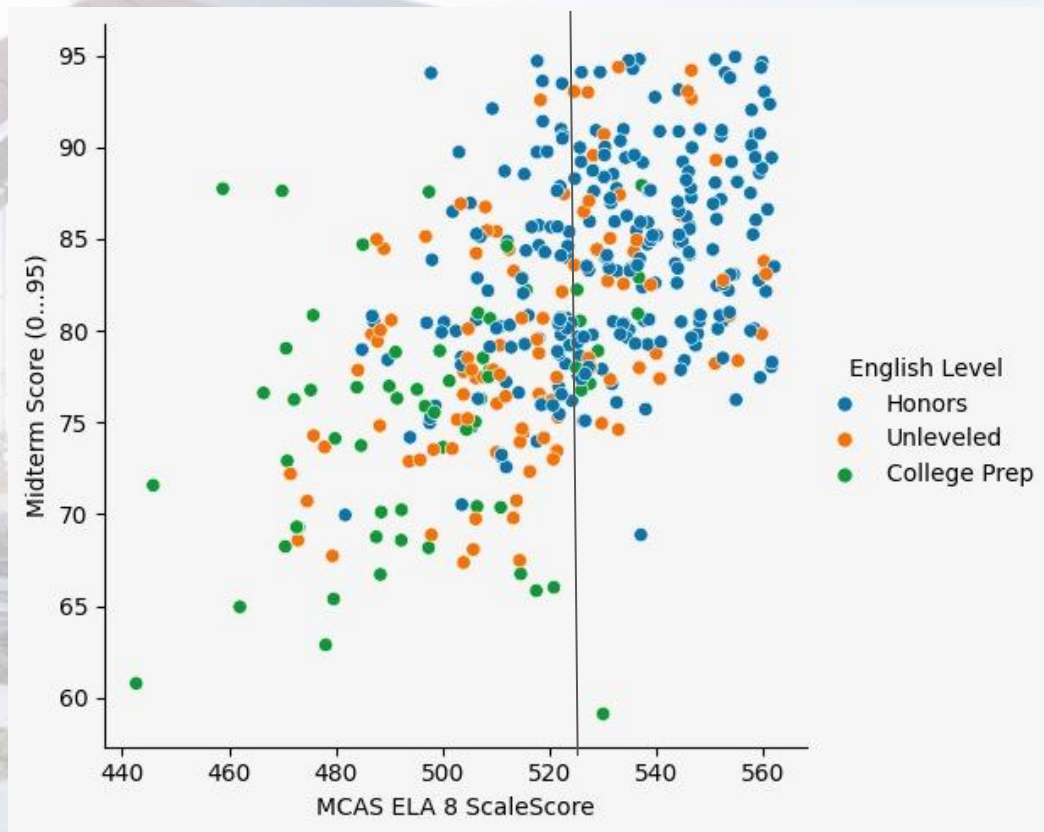
Current Student Population by Course and MCAS Score

MCAS ELA Performance Level 8th Grade	College Prep	Honors	Pilot
Exceeds Expectations	7.14%	51.21%	20.56%
Meeting Expectations	35.71%	42.91%	60.75%
Partially Meeting Expectations	44.29%	5.54%	17.76%
Not Meeting Expectations	8.59%	0%	0%

Student Population by Course and MCAS Score



Midyear Exam Results by Course and MCAS Score





Outcomes so Far

Grades, Midterms,
Student Survey, Recommendations

1st Semester Grades by Race and Course

	College Prep	Honors	Pilot
Asian (104)	3.1 (n=16)	3.7 (n=69)	3.2 (n=19)
Black (41)	2.5 (n=17)	3.5 (n=8)	2.8 (n=16)
Latinx (49)	2.3 (n=16)	3.4 (n=24)	3.1 (n=9)
Multiracial* (48)	3.7 (n=5)	3.6 (N=33)	3.6 (n=10)
White (298)	3.1 (n=42)	3.6 (n=198)	3.4 (n=58)
Totals (540)	2.8 (n=96)	3.6 (n=333)	3.1 (n=117)

Mid Year Exam: Common 9th Grade Experience

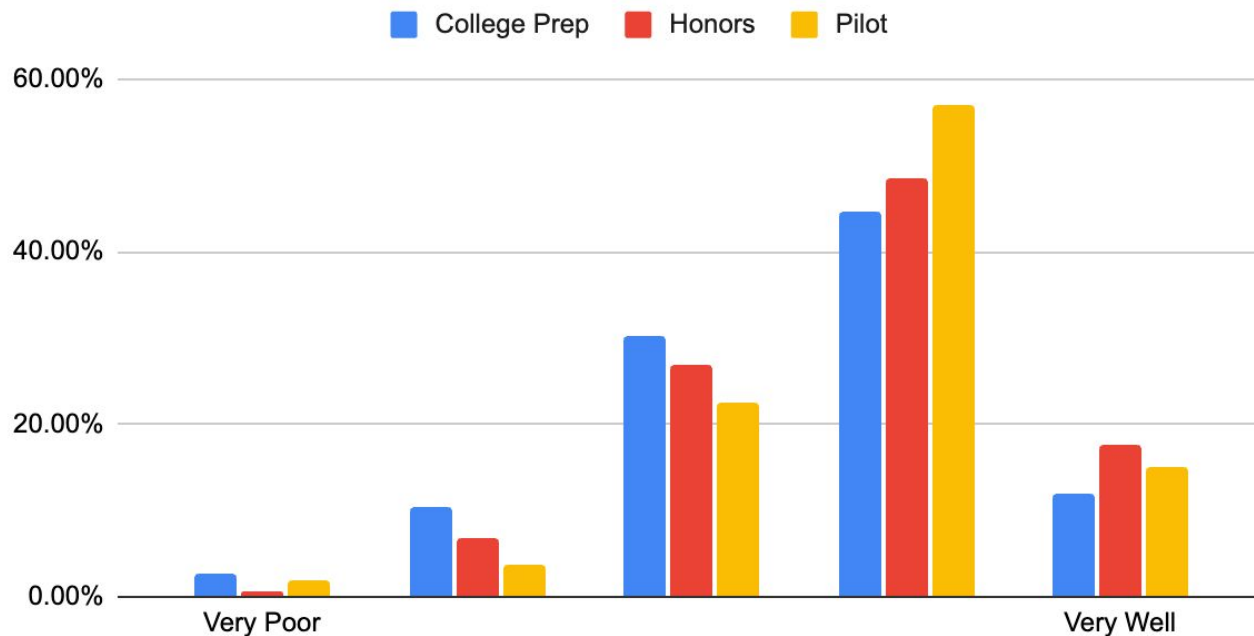
- Two portions: A writing assessment and a vocabulary assessment (This presentation only discusses the writing.)
- A 90-minute writing assessment. Students write an essay that forms a thesis statement about the author's message in a complex poem. They must use 5-6 pieces of evidence with analysis to support their thesis.
- All 9th grade courses take the same exam.
- Exams are scored blind by one of nine 9th grade English teachers.
- The exam grade (writing and vocabulary together) make of 20% of a student's Quarter 2 grade.

Midyear Exam Results by Course & Race

	College Prep	Honors	Pilot
Asian	73.68	85.67	80.16
Black	76.94	84.16	75.16
Latinx	74.57	85.04	82.92
Multiracial*	70.71	85.43	82.45
White	76.93	85.10	81.63
Combined Average	76.03	85.23	80.93

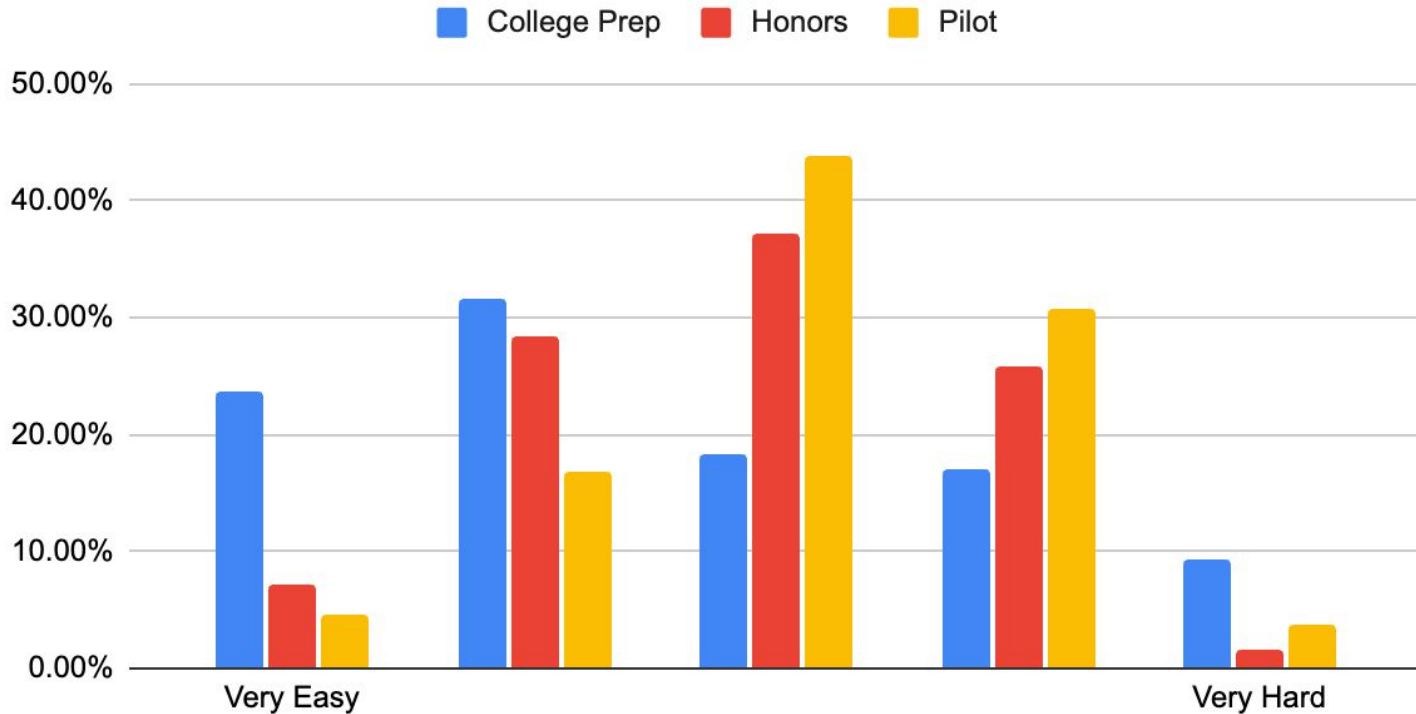
Student Mid Year Survey

How would you rate the pilot's ability to build community among different students in your English class?



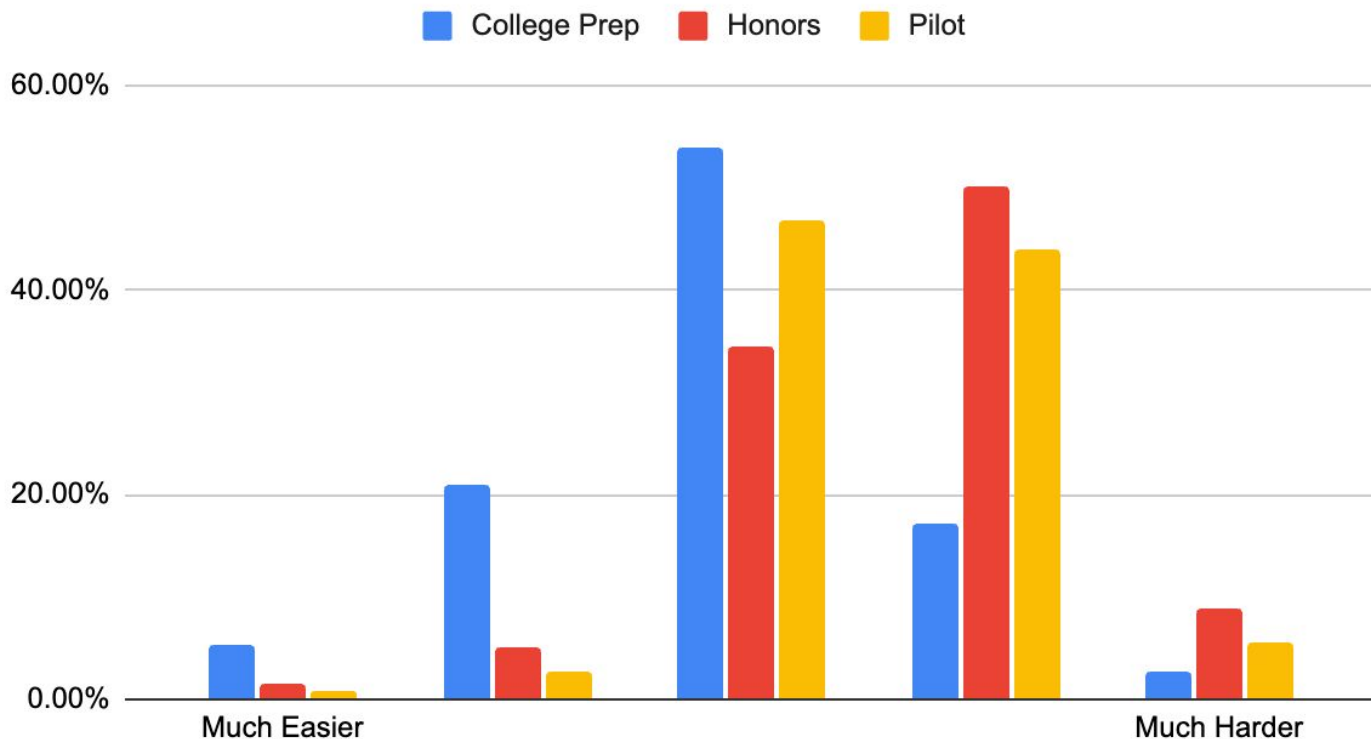
Student Mid Year Survey

How easy is it to keep up with the workload/pace in this course?



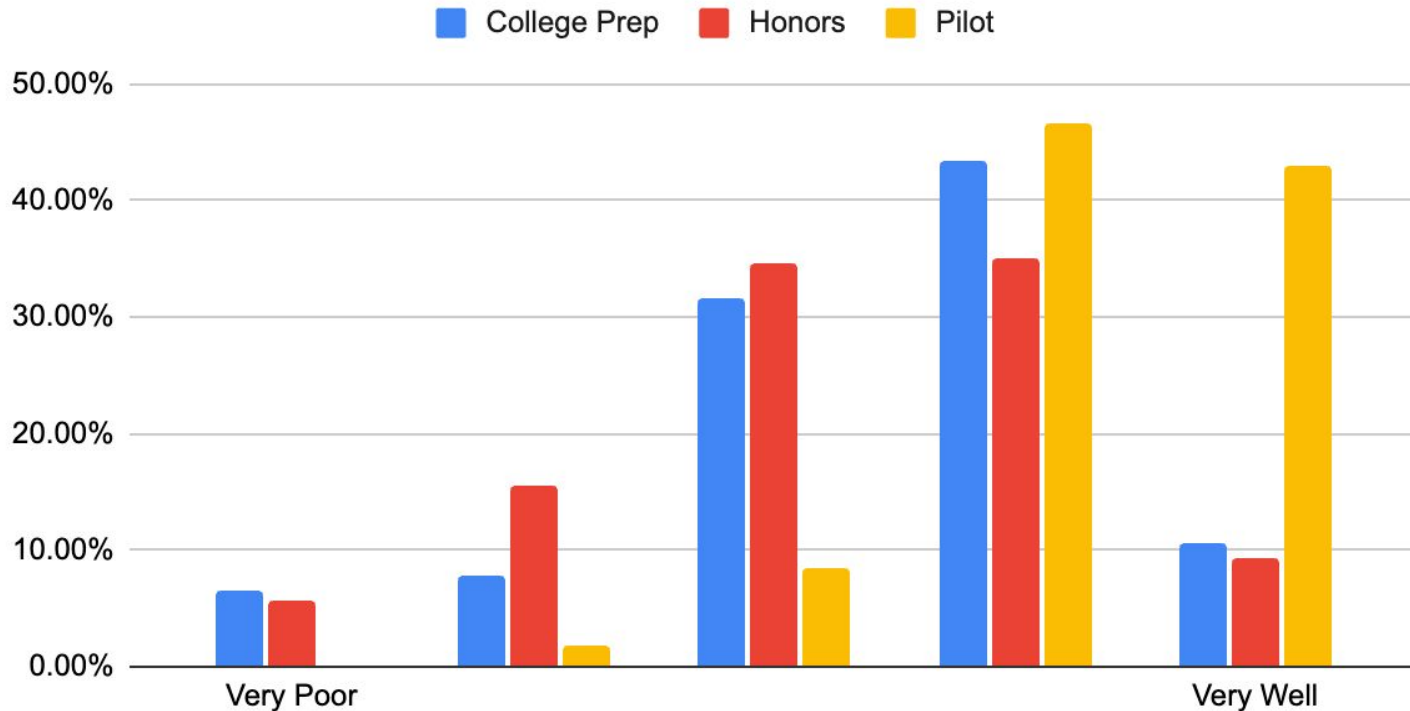
Student Mid Year Survey

How does 9th grade English compare to 8th grade English?



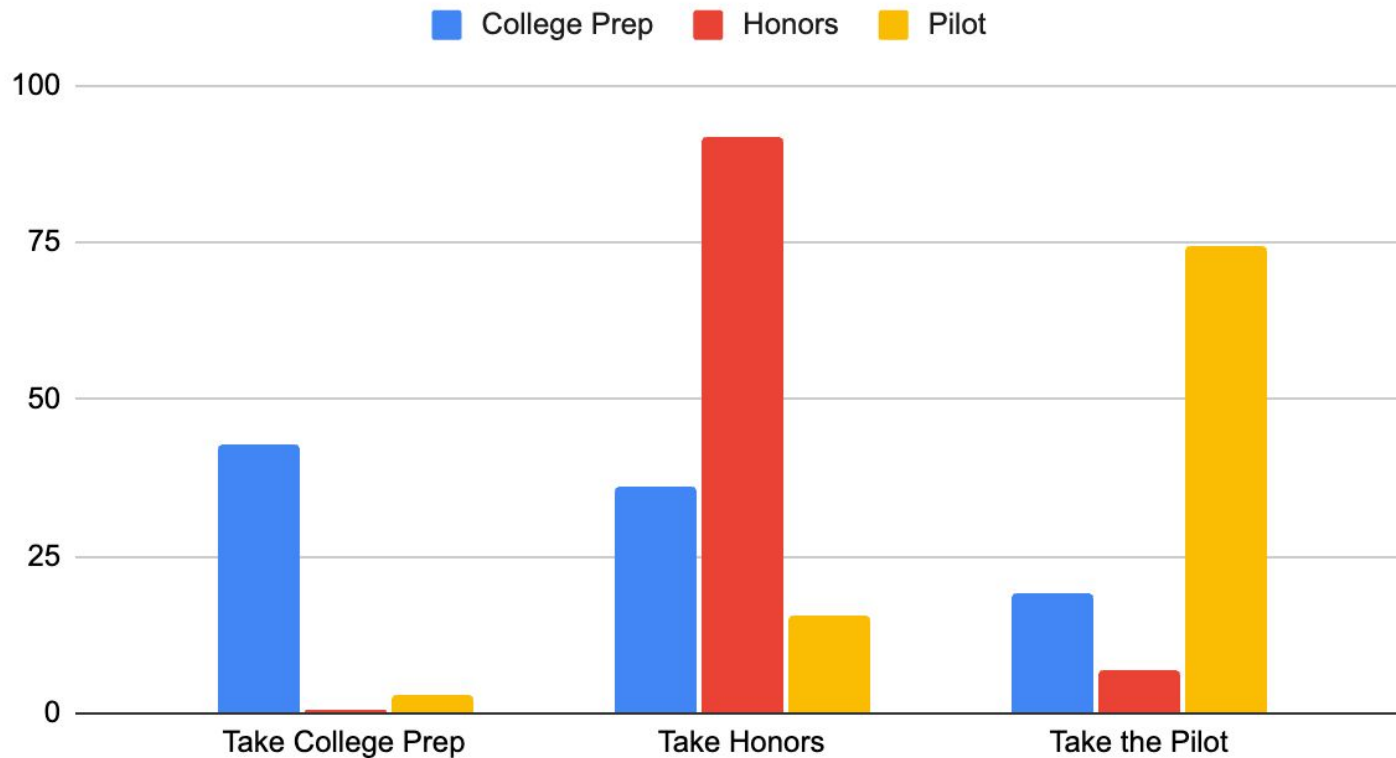
Student Mid Year Survey

How would you rate the ability of your English class to provide choice points (different books, different assessments that you...



Student Mid Year Survey

If you had to do it all over again, would you...



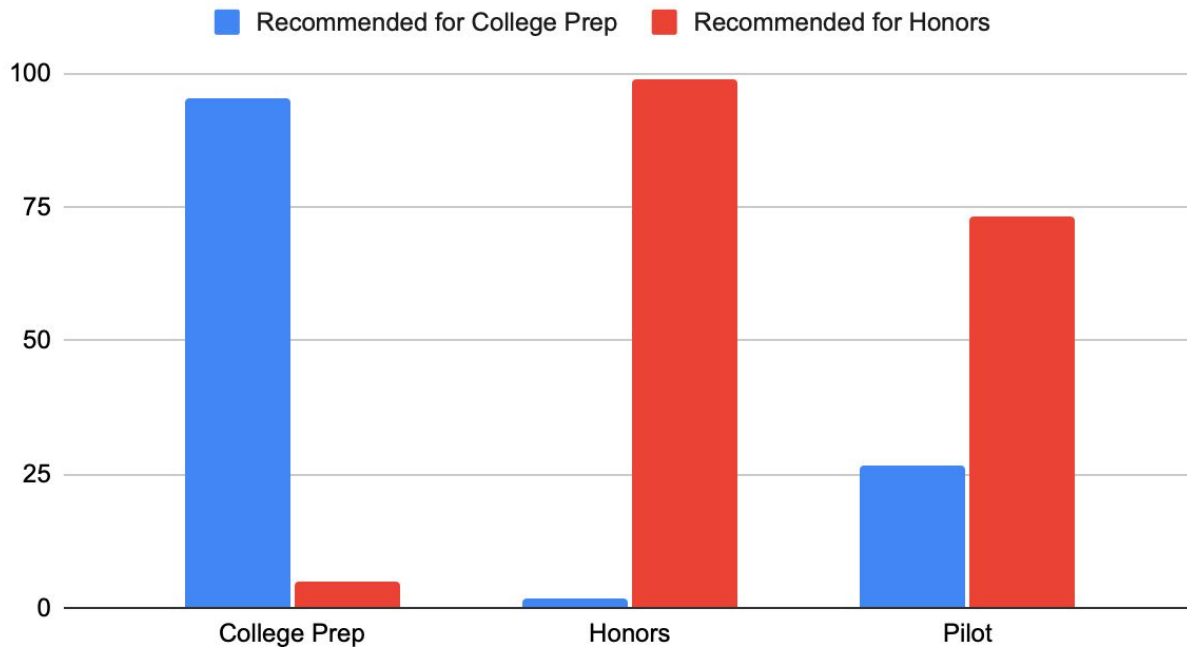
Hattie on Tracking (p. 186-187)

“Ability grouping fosters friendship networks linked to students’ group membership, and these peer groups may contribute to polarized track-related attitudes among high school students with high-track students becoming more enthusiastic and low-track students more alienated.”

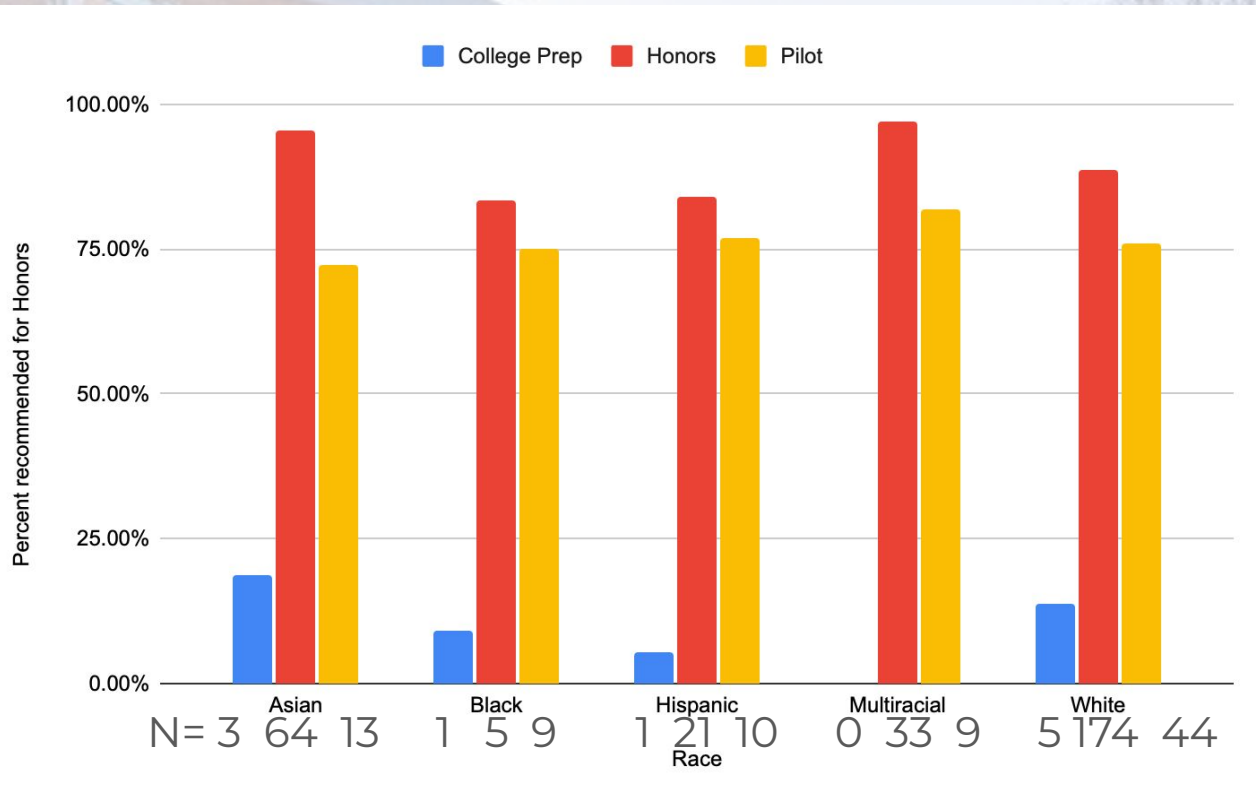
Hattie, John *Visible Learning, the Sequel* (2023)

10th Grade Course Recommendations by Class Level

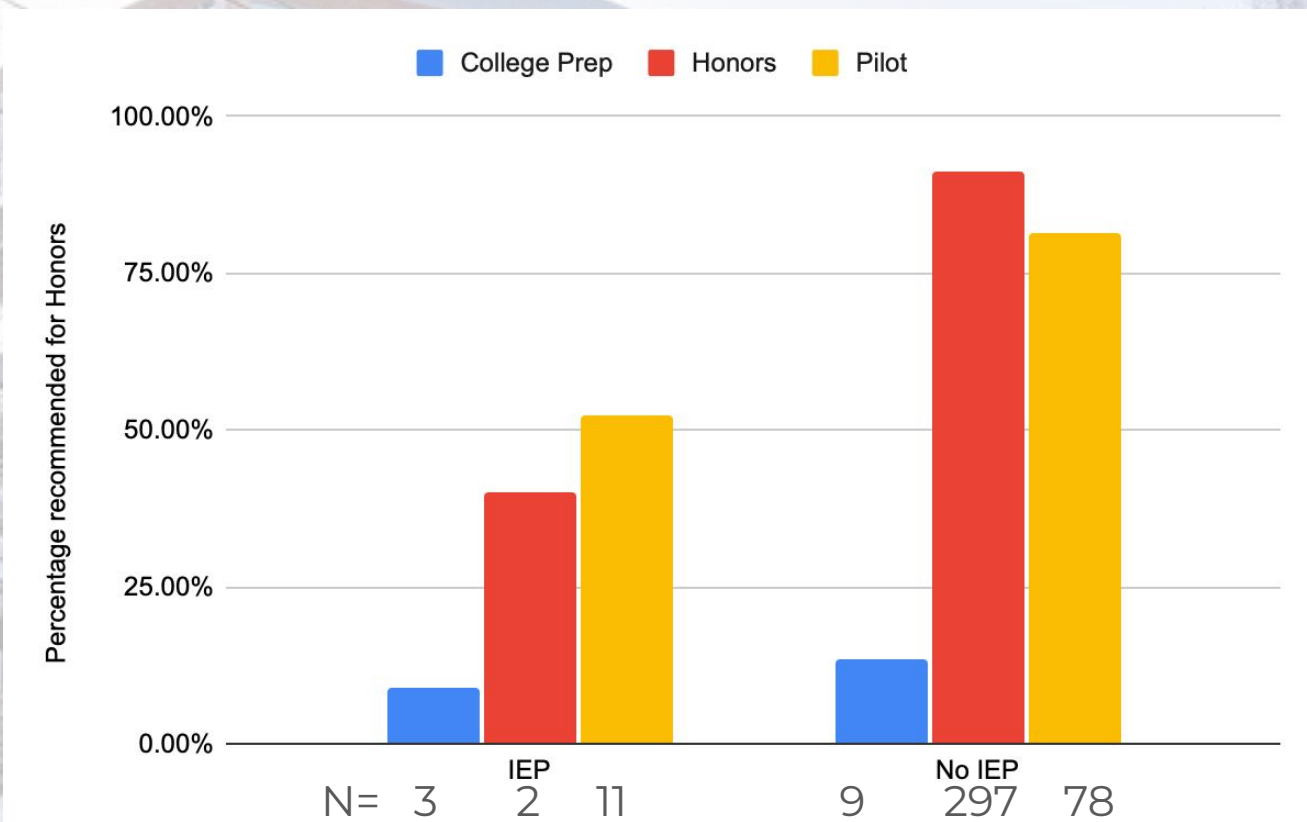
10th Grade English Course Recommendations by Level



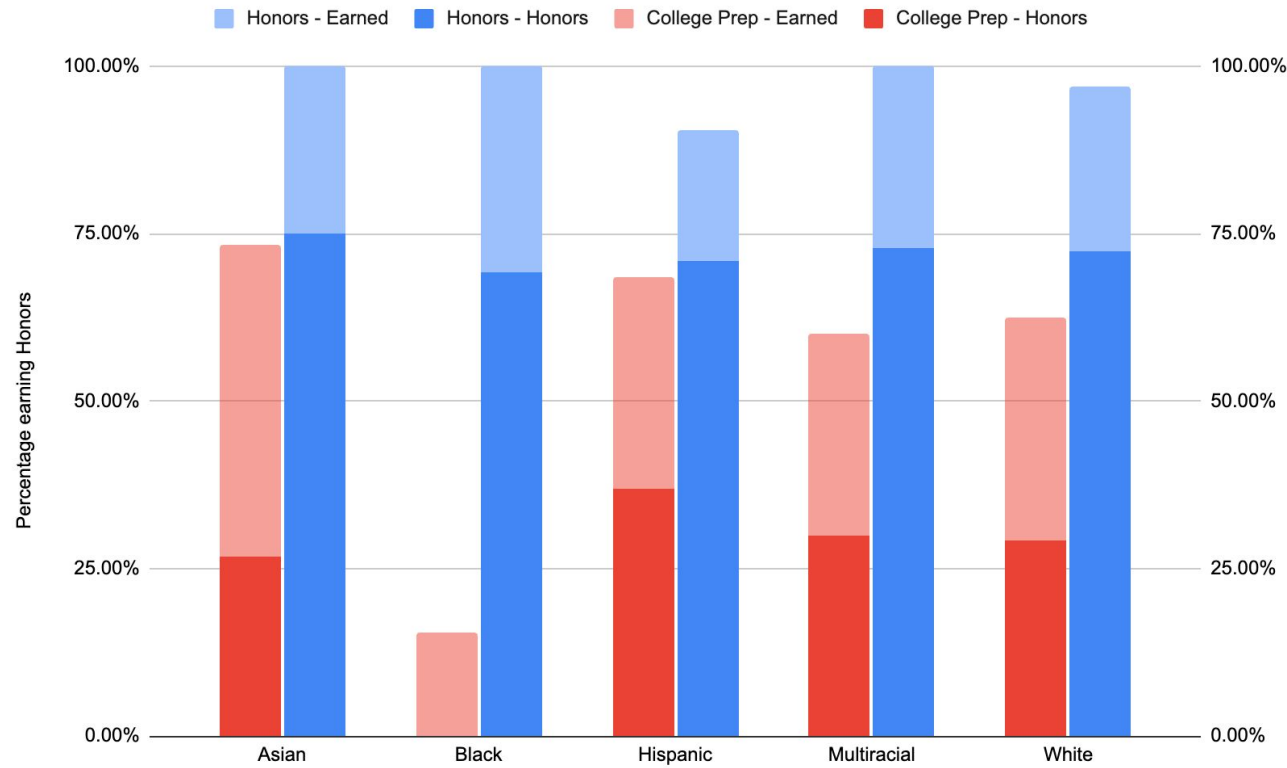
10th Grade Course Recommendations by Class Level



10th Grade Course Selection & IEP Status

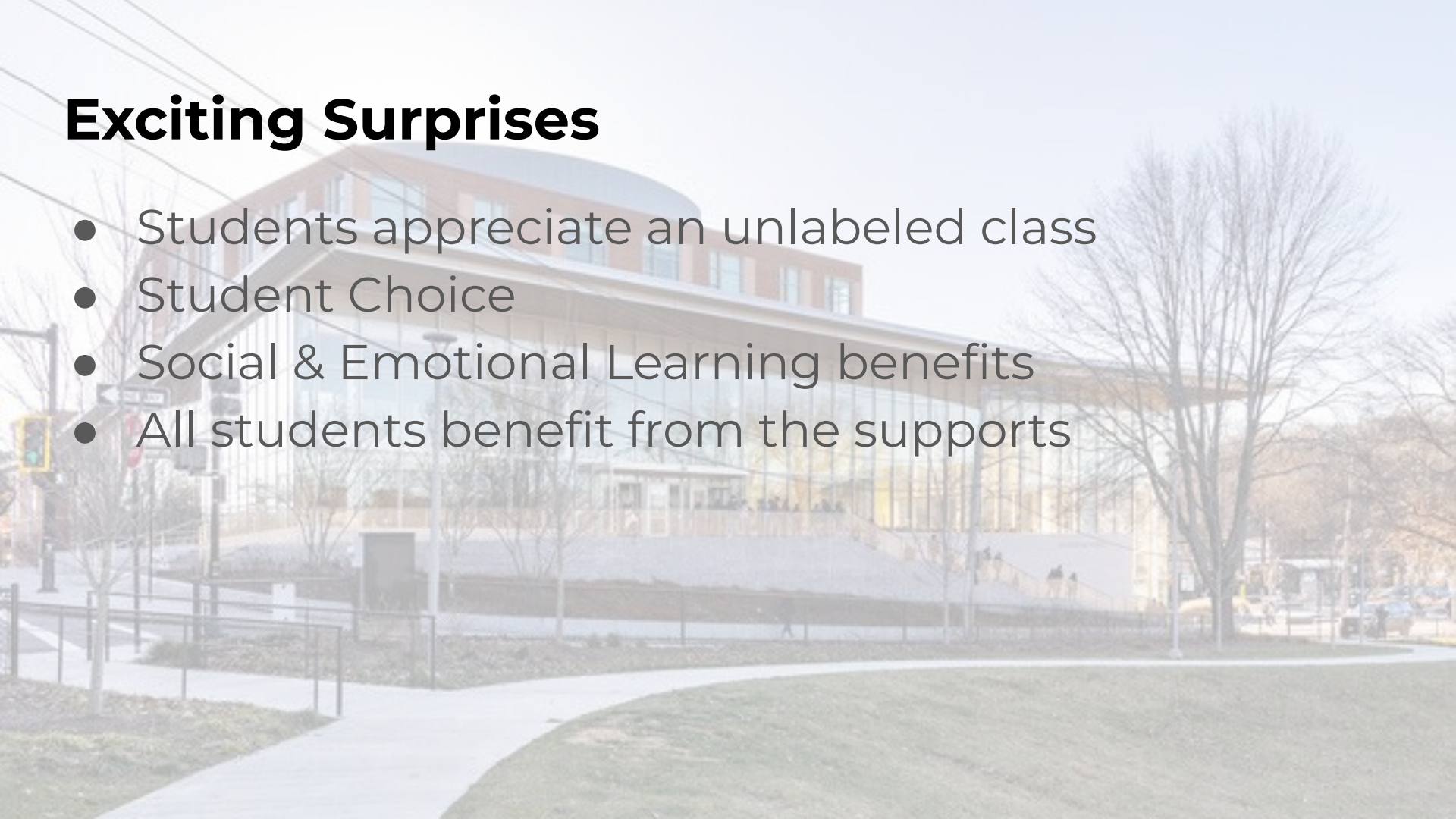


Course Level of Current 10th Graders According to 9th Grade Level



Exciting Surprises

- Students appreciate an unlabeled class
- Student Choice
- Social & Emotional Learning benefits
- All students benefit from the supports





NEXT STEPS

**Full Implementation
for 2024-2025**

**2nd Semester 9th grade
common assessments**

Pilot Team Recommendations for Q3/Q4

- Work with 9th Grade team to develop a Common Assessment for Reading to more closely model MCAS structure and provide data on how the differentiated text are affecting reading skills.
- Work with 9th Grade team to develop a common final exam so that we can see how students develop in second half of the year.
- Work with deans, guidance counselors, parents and caregivers to help Pilot student utilize existing office hours.
- Ensure students are making text/assignment choices that match with their intended goals for 10th Grade English.



Discussion

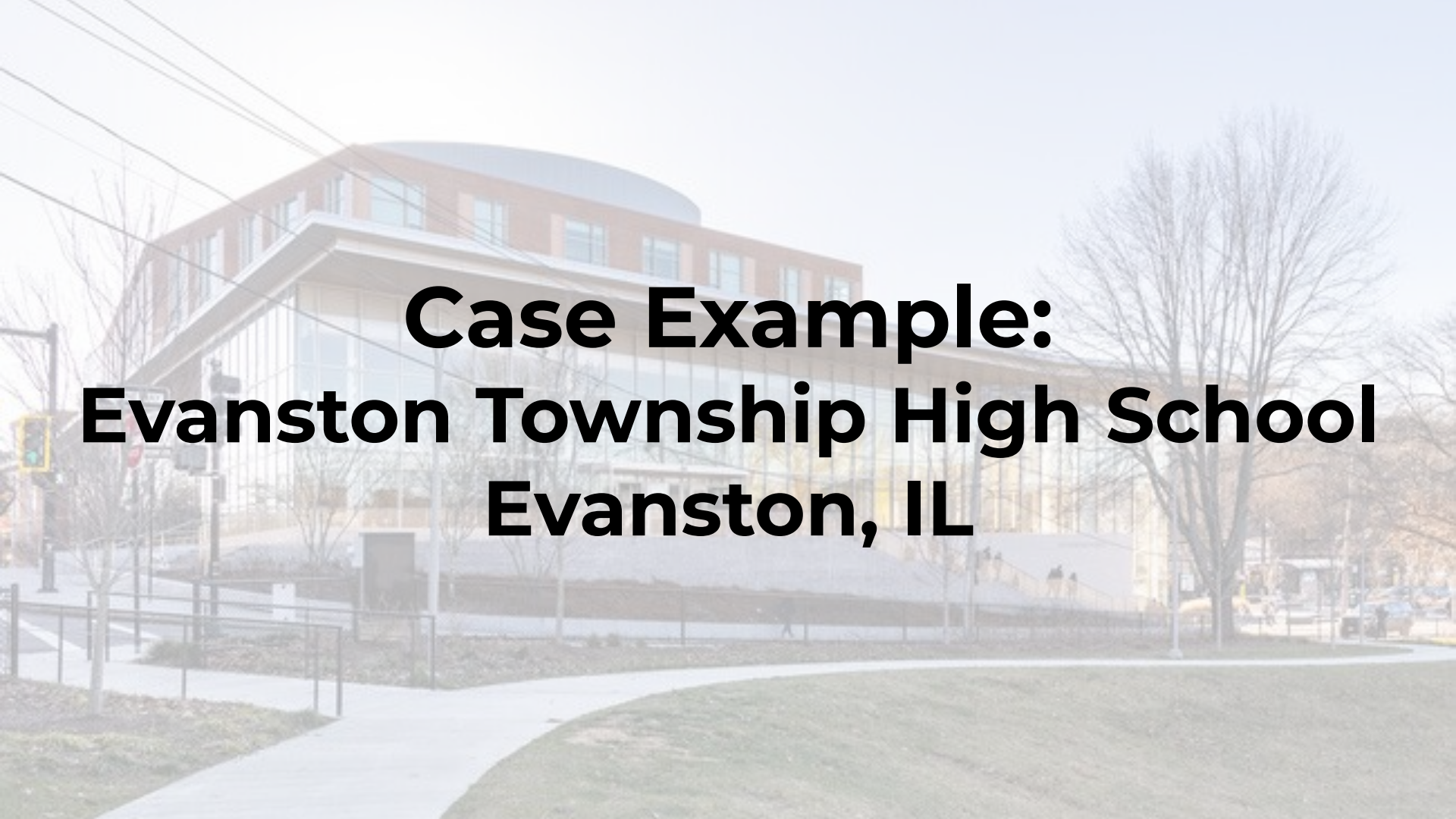


RESEARCH

DOE Study

Meta Analyses

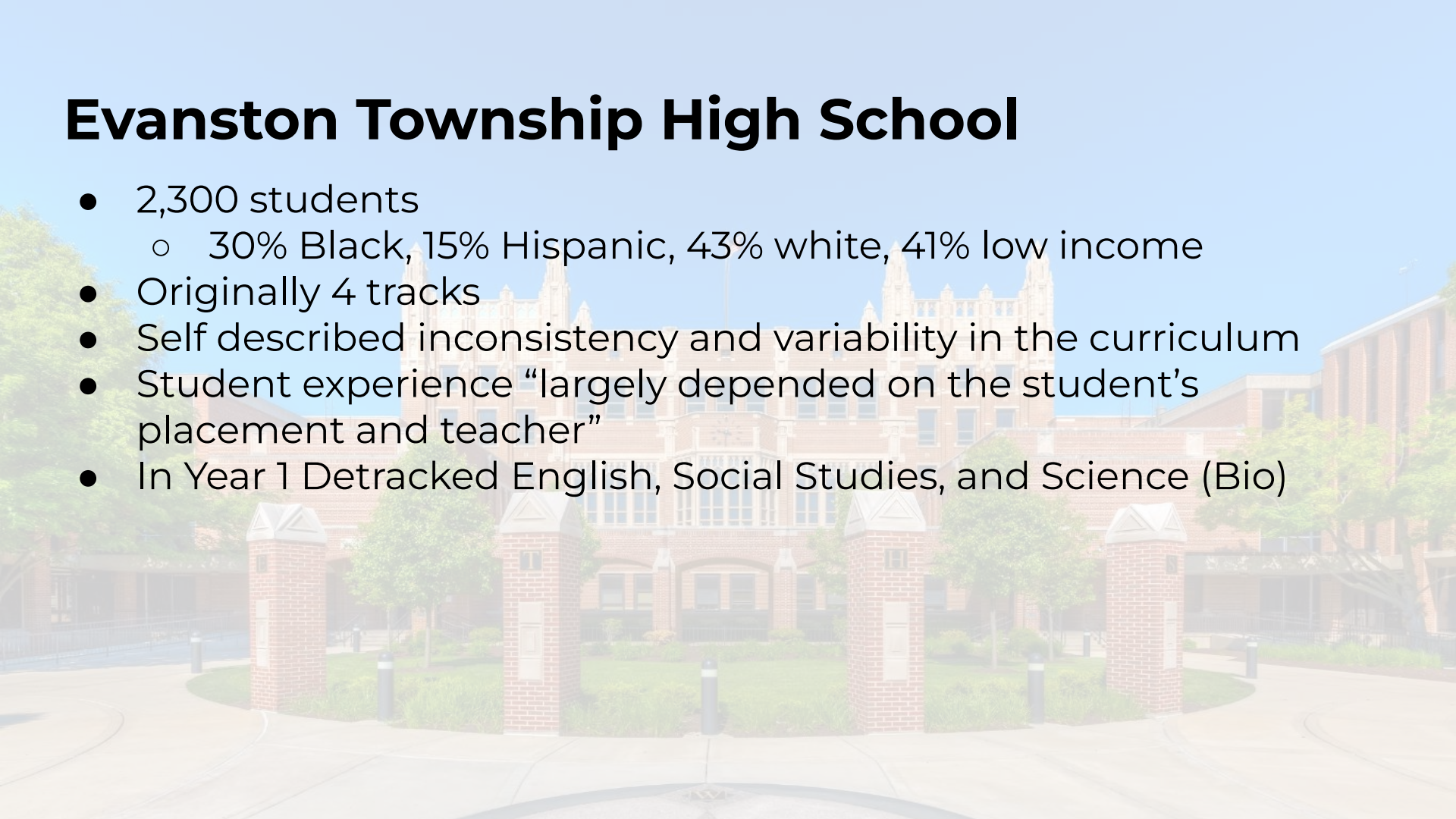
Case Example: ETHS

The background image shows a modern high school building with a curved, multi-story facade. The building features a combination of brick and large glass windows. In the foreground, there is a paved walkway, a grassy area, and some bare trees, suggesting a winter or early spring setting. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Case Example: Evanston Township High School Evanston, IL

Evanston Township High School

- 2,300 students
 - 30% Black, 15% Hispanic, 43% white, 41% low income
- Originally 4 tracks
- Self described inconsistency and variability in the curriculum
- Student experience “largely depended on the student’s placement and teacher”
- In Year 1 Detracked English, Social Studies, and Science (Bio)



Evanston Township High School 5 Years In

- 91 students who would have been placed into regular-level (lowest) courses in 9th grade, took AP courses in 11th grade.

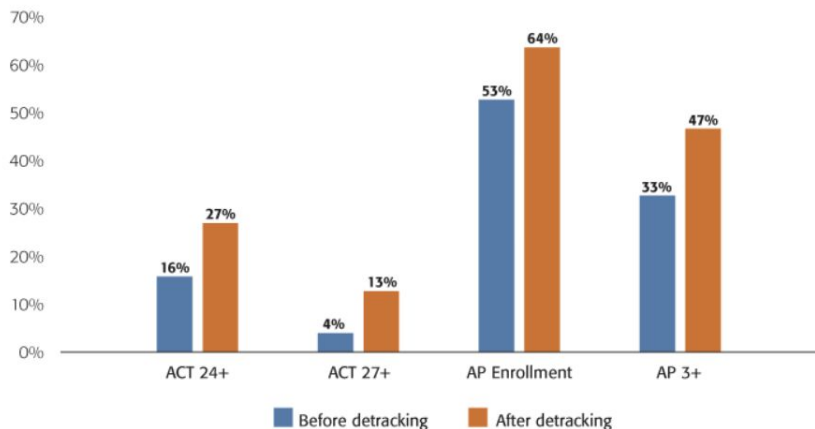
Performance of Evanston Township High School graduates on ACT exams

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	TWO OR MORE RACES	ASIAN	LOW INCOME
2011 graduates – % earned ACT composite of 24 or higher	79%	17%	22%	41%	48%	14%
2015 graduates – % earned ACT composite of 24 or higher	84%	23%	30%	64%	67%	21%

Evanston Township High School 5 Years In

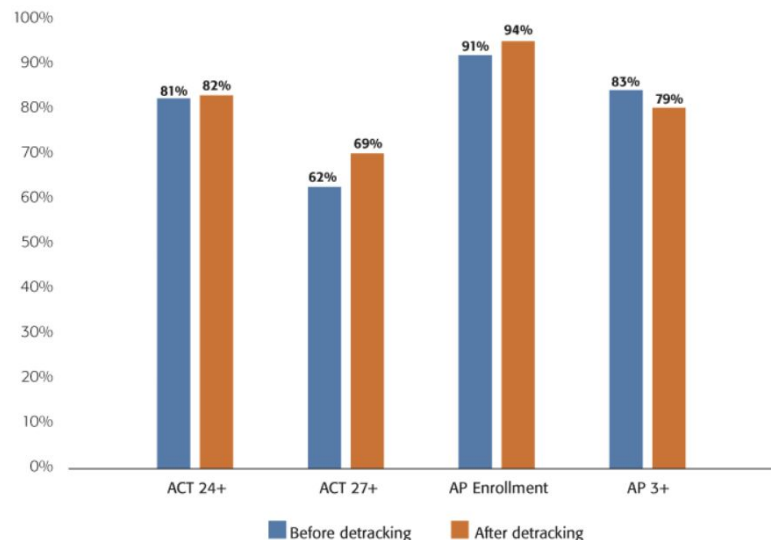
How do "regular-level" students do?

After detracking, "regular-level" students enrolled in honors-level courses in greater numbers and subsequently improved their performance on Advanced Placement exams and on the ACT exam.



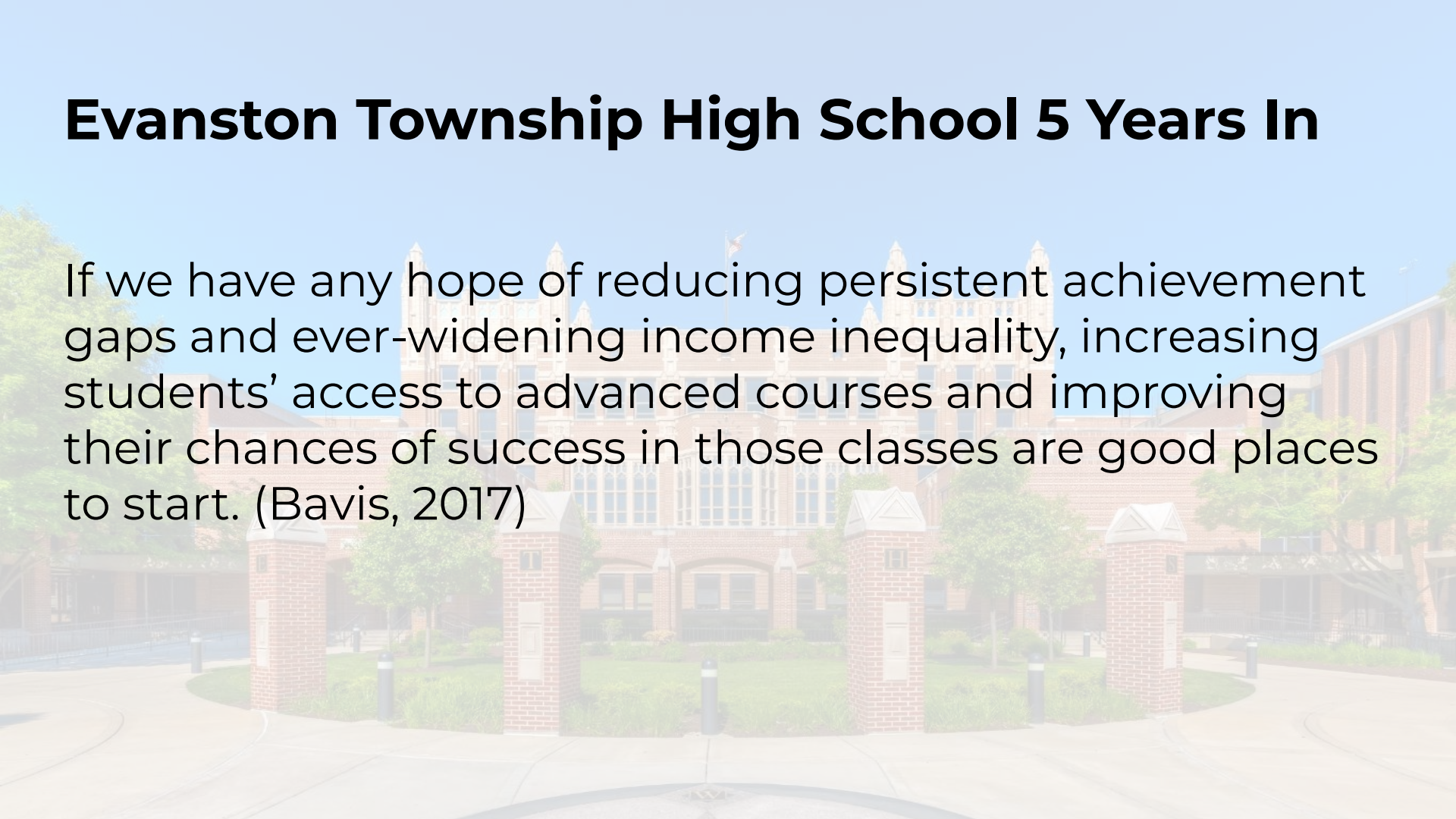
How do "honors-level" students do?

After detracking, "honors-level" students continued to enroll in Advanced Placements courses and continued to have high performance on both the Advanced Placements exams and on the ACT exam.



Evanston Township High School 5 Years In

If we have any hope of reducing persistent achievement gaps and ever-widening income inequality, increasing students' access to advanced courses and improving their chances of success in those classes are good places to start. (Bavis, 2017)



Defining Terms

Leveling

The current system at BHS whereby some classes are sorted by level (Standard, Honors, AP etc...) but students and families have choices about which course to take.

Tracking

A system by which students are assigned to leveled classes with few (if any) chances to move between levels. Typically linked to some type of entrance exam or grade requirement.

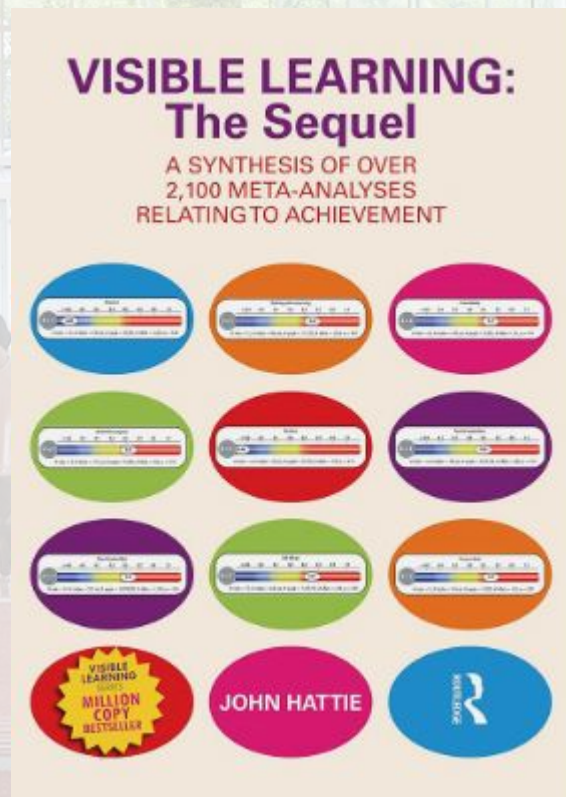
Heterogeneous Classes

Classes where students who might otherwise be in different level classes are in the same course together.

Hattie *Visible Learning* 2nd Edition

A 2023 synthesis of over 2100 meta-analyses relating to achievement

Moving from “what works?”
to “what works best?”



Hattie *Visible Learning* 2nd Edition

A 2023 synthesis of over 2100 meta-analyses relating to achievement

Moving from “what works?” to “what works best?”

Effect size of $d \geq 0.4$ is desirable, greater than what a teacher can typically do in one year and likely worth spending time on

0.40 is a standard from which to judge effects
(p 17)

The zone between $d = 0.0$ and 0.15 is what students can probably achieve if there was no schooling (p. 20)

Any effects below $d = 0.15$ can be considered potentially harmful and probably should not be implemented.

Additional Sources

