

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: September 26, 2016

To: Raymond E. Lechner, Ph.D.
Superintendent

From: Mrs. Kelly Jackson
Principal, Highcrest Middle School/Wilmette Junior High School

Subject: New Trier High School Survey Report

Background Information

For the past 7 years, students at New Trier High school participated in a survey during the second semester of their freshman year. This survey identifies how well prepared students perceive themselves to for the challenges of high school. 981 students took the survey last spring, including students from all six sender schools as well as private schools in the area. In addition to reporting perceived preparedness in core academic areas, the survey also asks respondents to comment on elective classes chosen, physical education, participation in musical and theatrical performances, and participation in extra-curricular and athletic activities at the junior high level.

For the purposes of this report, we will primarily focus on the response from Wilmette Junior High School graduates (N=385). As Principal of WJHS, I have access to our school's responses and to "All Freshman" responses. Comparisons in this report will center on "All Freshman." In addition to the student data, we facilitated discussions with NTHS teachers. The perception of the New Trier staff is that WJHS students are well prepared and perform at a high level in all classes at NTHS.

Preparedness of Students by Subject

Students were asked to self-rate their level of preparedness for all subjects on a four-point scale (Well Prepared, Adequately Prepared, Somewhat Prepared, and Not Prepared). For the purpose of this report, we combined the "Well Prepared" and "Adequately Prepared" categories as positive indicators of preparedness and the "Somewhat Prepared" and "Not Prepared" categories as negative indicators.

Included in this report is information on core classes (English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) and Foreign Language. As the data show, on the whole, our students are leaving the junior high reporting a high level of preparedness for the rigor of the NTHS curriculum.

On average 83% of former WJHS students surveyed, reported that their elementary and middle school experiences prepared them for New Trier. It is important to note that of the students surveyed on average around 10% reported that they participated in a level other than the level recommended by NTHS. The vast majority of these level changes resulted in the students participating in a level higher than the recommended level (7%).

Table 1: Student preparedness by subject

Subject	WJHS		TOWNSHIP	
	Prepared	Unprepared	Prepared	Unprepared
English (Literature)	73%	26%	74%	25%
English (Writing)	74%	26%	70%	30%
Mathematics	82%	18%	80%	20%
Science	57%	37%	66%	27%
Social Studies	77%	18%	80%	13%
Foreign Language	71%	24%	64%	26%
*Totals may not equal 100% as some students answered "na" to the question.				

Table 2: Historical data by subject

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)
English (Literature)	75%	25%	75%	25%	66%	33%	62%	37%	79%	13%	79%	17%	73%	26%
English (Writing)	74%	26%	70%	30%	64%	36%	66%	33%	80%	20%	78%	21%	74%	26%
Mathematics	83%	17%	85%	15%	85%	15%	86%	13%	85%	15%	83%	16%	82%	18%
Science	81%	19%	84%	16%	69%	31%	68%	31%	70%	26%	73%	24%	57%	37%
Social Studies	83%	17%	85%	15%	82%	18%	85%	14%	83%	8%	75%	16%	77%	18%
Foreign Language	70%	30%	69%	31%	66%	34%	65%	34%	70%	23%	71%	21%	71%	24%

Continuing Data on Preparedness and the Freshman Experience

Students were asked a series of questions regarding social service, connections with adults, homework and study skills. The following section will report percentages of student responses in four categories: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Table 3: Student preparedness other categories

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My JH experience prepared me to be successful in high school.	28%	55%	14%	3%
At my JH, there were community service opportunities to use my talents and skills to help others.	24%	55%	18%	3%
At my JH, there was an adult I felt comfortable going to when I needed help or wanted to talk.	36%	45%	14%	6%
The amount of homework I received in JH was appropriate to prepare me for high school expectations.	19%	39%	32%	10%
At my JH, I learned adequate skills to be organized and study appropriately.	26%	45%	23%	6%

Actions

As we analyze the historical freshman survey data, we have noticed some trends in both the WJHS data as compared over years, and the WJHS data as compared with the Township as a whole. Several initiatives have taken place to address some of these trends, and we have planned new initiatives as a result of this year’s report.

Past Initiatives

English Language (Literature and Reading)

While both English categories are down slightly from last year, the positive numbers in writing specifically are higher than the township. As the ELA department at WJHS continues to collaborate with the English department at NTHS, curricular changes have been implemented this year (2016-2017) in ELA to improve WJHS students’ preparation for high school English.

- The Summer Experience in ELA (SEE) was continued in both 7th and 8th grades in ELA. This program requires incoming 7th and 8th graders to read a novel and reflect on their learning through responses to that reading.
- Curriculum maps have been revised to integrate reading and writing instruction across the grade level.
- Research-based curricular materials are being utilized to support writing instruction at all grade levels (Lucy Calkins).

Social Studies

- Curriculum review and writing during the 2012-2014 school years to implement the use of inquiry based learning during social studies classes.

Future Initiatives

English Language (Literature and Reading)

- Implementation of Writing Units of Study K-8 in 2016-2017 school year.
- Implementation of Reading Units of Study 6-8 in 2017-2018 school year.

Science

Science numbers were down across the township, as well as in Wilmette. When analyzing the anecdotal comments that students gave, along with the percentage of students who did not take the recommended course, it was found that 33% of students started in Physics their Freshman year, and that 10% of students taking science did not take the recommended level. While principles of physics are taught and reviewed throughout the K-8 experience, the high school physics class is much different from the NGSS-aligned units taught in 8th Grade: Energy Transfer, Genetics, and Water and Invasive Species.

- Complete NGSS aligned curriculum implemented in 2015-2016 school year.
- Science teachers continue to meet and consult with science teachers at NTHS.
- Common assessments now ensure similar experiences for students across the grade level.
- Flipped units allow for better differentiation and more in-depth independent study.

World Languages

- Curriculum review for K-8 and 5-8 World Languages to review best practices in instruction and development of language proficiency.
- Alignment of K-8 and 5-8 individual languages for improved transition between grade levels and improved consistency in practice between classes.
- Pilot of AAPPL proficiency assessment for 8th grade Spanish placement in 2016-2017.

Of particular note is a question on the survey asking how prepared students were to use technology as a tool for learning. New Trier uses iPads in a 1:1 Learning Environment, as is the practice at Highcrest and Wilmette Junior high, and we will be paying close attention to these numbers in the coming years, as our first groups of students who have participated in the 1:1 Learning Program enter New Trier. This year's report has 63% of students reporting that they are well or adequately prepared to use technology as a tool for learning, while 19% report that they felt unprepared.

Summary

Over the past several years we have seen a fluctuation in our students' perceptions of preparedness for high school. We take this feedback seriously, and are planning future work to address those fluctuations and increase the number of students reporting they feel prepared for high school. Based on this report one can see some past efforts have been successful, as we see a positive trend in some of the data. In other areas, there are more steps that we can take to further ensure our students feel prepared with the skills they need in all areas to be successful in high school.

**Recommended for approval
by the Board of Education**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raymond E. Lechner", written over a horizontal line.

**Raymond E. Lechner, Ph.D.
Superintendent**