

Post-Secondary English Survey Results Executive Summary

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Post-Secondary Education Survey English Results

Background

Participation by the state of Hawai`i in the American Diploma Project involves a joint commitment from the Hawai`i Department of Education, the University of Hawaii and the Hawai`i Business Roundtable. Together, these three partners seek to address ways of plugging the “leaking educational pipeline” in our state.

The American Diploma Project has four cornerstones:

- More closely aligning HS exit expectations with college/work entry expectations;
- Encouraging all students to pursue a more rigorous curriculum in high school;
- Aligning assessments between secondary and post-secondary in order to make more efficient use of results; and
- Tracking students longitudinally from high school through their post-secondary experience.

This report deals with the results of surveys of post-secondary faculty, intended to address the first of the four cornerstones -- alignment of secondary and post-secondary expectations.

Survey Method

These surveys were conducted on-line in October 2007 using a survey instrument developed by Achieve, Inc., the “parent company” of the American Diploma Project. The survey included eight skill areas: language, literature, communication, writing, research, logic, media and informational text.

A total of 290 usable responses were received: 258 from faculty at the ten campuses of the University of Hawai`i and another thirty-two from faculty of three private universities in the state (Brigham Young University -- Hawai`i, Chaminade University, and Hawai`i Pacific University). (See Attachment A for more detail about survey participants.)

Subject Areas

Faculty were asked to identify specific **entry-level** courses in **any subject area**, and to then evaluate the significance of various English language skills for student success in the identified courses. Courses identified by respondents fell into seven broad categories:

- Arts, Humanities, Language and Literature
- Communication (written and oral)
- Career and Technical Education
- Math
- Natural Sciences
- Professional Schools
- Social Sciences

(Refer to Attachment B for course specifics)

Respondents used a scale of 1--10 to indicate the relative necessity of a given skill for success in their entry-level course (1= not essential; 10= most essential).

Subject Matter Areas with Low Response Rates

Because the number of responses from math faculty was so low in the English survey (n = 7), those responses were not included in the analysis. Also, the responses from faculty in Career and Technical Education numbered only nine -- so the responses were combined with responses of faculty from professional school programs. (There is a shared emphasis on application of communication principles.)

Results

Skills Identified as Key

Below is a summary of the skills which were consistently rated high (9-10) by 50% or more of the survey respondents. (Refer to Attachment C for complete list)

- Seven skills were consistently rated 9-10 by 50% or more of the respondents overall, as well as by 50% or more from at least four of the five subject areas. (Skills in **bold** font had not only a high percent of 9-10 ratings, but also one percent or less of 1-2 ratings.)

Communication

Q 23 -- ability to give and follow instructions

Writing

- Q 30 -- plan writing with notes
- Q 31 -- Select and use informal/technical language
- Q 32 -- Organize writing with a thesis, etc.
- Q 35 -- Cite sources

Research

- Q 43 -- Evaluate credibility of sources

Logic

Q 46 -- Distinguish fact from fiction

- Six additional skills were rated 9-10 by 50% or more of the respondents overall, but 50% or more from just two or three of the five subject areas:

Communication

- Q 24 -- Summarize oral information
- Q 29 -- Work in teams

Writing

- Q 38 -- Write an academic essay

Research

Q 42 -- Gather info from primary and secondary sources

Informational Text

Q 60 -- Follow written instructions

Q 61 -- Identify main ideas in informational text

- Finally, these nine skills were not rated 9-10 by 50% or more of the total respondent group, but did earn 9-10 ratings from 50% or more of at least two of the five subject area respondents:

Language

Q 7 -- Use standard English

Q13 -- Quantitative and Technical Information

Writing

Q 33 -- writing process (revise based on feedback)

Q 34 -- Edit for grammar

Q 37 -- Use Excel and Powerpoint

Research

Q 44 -- Report findings within time/length limits

Logic

Q 54 -- Construct arguments -- oral and written

Informational Text

Q 64 -- Interpret maps, charts, etc

Q 67 -- Draw conclusions based on evidence

Skills Summary

A total of twenty-two English language skills have been identified by college and university faculty as important to post-secondary academic success across a wide range of subject areas. The complete list includes:

Language

Q 7 -- Use standard English

Q13 -- Quantitative and Technical Information

Communication

Q 23 -- ability to give and follow instructions

Q 24 -- Summarize oral information

Q 29 -- Work in teams

Writing

- Q 30 -- Plan writing with notes
- Q 31 -- Select and use informal/technical language
- Q 32 -- Organize writing with a thesis, etc
- Q 33 -- writing process (revise based on feedback)
- Q 34 -- Edit for grammar
- Q 35 -- Cite sources
- Q 37 -- Use Excel and Powerpoint
- Q 38 -- Write an academic essay

Research

- Q 42 -- Gather info from primary and secondary sources
- Q 43 -- Evaluate credibility of sources
- Q 44 -- Report findings within time/length limits

Logic

- Q 46 -- Distinguish fact from fiction**
- Q 54 -- Construct arguments -- oral and written

Informational Text

- Q 60 -- Follow written instructions
- Q 61 -- Identify main ideas in informational text
- Q 64 -- Interpret maps, charts, etc
- Q 67 -- Draw conclusions based on evidence

Differing Perceptions of Importance

The data cited above (and listed fully in Attachment C) represent the perception of the importance of various language arts skills to each unique discipline across multiple subject-area disciplines: communications, humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, etc. The Table C data begin from the subject matter perspective, and reveal what percent of respondents from that subject area rated a given skill as very important (9-10) or not very important (1-2) for success in introductory courses for the stated subject matter.

Another way to consider the responses is to focus on the various skills themselves. Of all the respondents who rated a specific skill as very important for success, what percent of them came from the social sciences? The natural sciences? Attachment D presents the data in this fashion for all seventy skill items.

Looking specifically at the top twenty-two skill items, we can get a sense of the perceived importance of a skill in various subject areas by examining the high (9-10) scores it was given. The key is to note the relationship between the overall percentage of respondents from a given subject area and to compare that to the percentage scoring a skill as 9 or 10. Items of interest include those where a difference of 30% or more exists between the participation rate and the rate ranking the skill as important.

Language

Q 7 -- Use standard English

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.5%	43.1%
CTE & Prof Schs	20.1%	22 %
Social Scis	24.4%	18.7%

Q13 -- Quantitative and Technical Information

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
CTE & Prof Schs	20.1%	44.2%
Naturals Scis	10.6%	20.8%
Communications	37.5%	16.9%

Communication

Q 23 -- ability to give and follow instructions

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.1%	37.2%
CTE & Prof Schs	20 %	23.1%
Social Scis	24.6%	22.6%

Q 24 -- Summarize oral information

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.6%	35.4%
CTE & Prof Schs	19.9%	27.8%
Social Scis	24.5%	22.2%

Q 29 -- Work in teams

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.7%	38.7%
CTE & Prof Schs	19.9%	27.3%
Social Scis	24.6%	20 %

Writing

Q 30 -- plan writing with notes

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.6%	42.4%
Social Scis	24.5%	23.5%
CTE & Prof Schs	19.9%	18.2%

Q 31 -- Select and use informal/technical language

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
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Communications	37.5%	38 %
CTE & Prof Schs	20%	26.1%
Social Scis	24.3%	17.6%

Q 32 -- Organize writing with a thesis, etc.

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.7%	42.5%
Social Scis	24.2%	25.1%
CTE & Prof Schs	19.9%	15.6%

Q 33 -- writing process (revise based on feedback)

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.9%	50.4%
CTE & Prof Schs	20%	18.2%
Social Scis	23.9%	17.5%

Q 34 -- Edit for grammar

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.4%	46 %
CTE & Prof Schs	19.9%	21.2%
Social Scis	24.6%	19 %

Q 35 -- Cite sources

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.6%	38.6%
Social Scis	24.7%	27.2%
CTE & Prof Schs	19.4%	17.7%

Q 37 -- Use Excel and Powerpoint

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.6%	37.2 %
CTE & Prof Schs	19.9%	24 %
Social Scis	24.5%	20.2%

Q 38 -- Write an academic essay

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.4%	41.9%
Social Scis	24.6%	29.9%
CTE & Prof Schs	19.9%	15 %

Research

Q42 -- Gather info from primary and secondary sources

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.5%	38.7%
Social Scis	24.4%	21.1%
CTE & Prof Schs	20.1%	19.7%

Q 43 -- Evaluate credibility of sources

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.6%	37.6%
Social Scis	24.5%	25.5%
CTE & Prof Schs	19.9%	16.8%

Q 44 -- Report findings within time/length limits

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.6%	39 %
Social Scis	24.1%	26.5%
CTE & Prof Schs	20.2%	18.4%

Logic

Q 46 -- Distinguish fact from fiction

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.6%	36 %
Social Scis	24.4%	27 %
CTE & Prof Schs	20.1%	18.5%

Q 54 -- Construct arguments -- oral and written

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.6%	43.7 %
Social Scis	24.7%	23.7%
CTE & Prof Schs	19.7%	13.3%

Informational Text

Q 60 -- Follow written instructions

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.8%	34 %
CTE & Prof Schs	20.1%	26.8%
Social Scis	24.1%	19.6%

Q 61 -- Identify main ideas in informational text

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.6%	33.8%
CTE & Prof Schs	20.1%	22.8%

Social Scis	24.4%	22.1%
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Q 64 -- Interpret maps, charts, etc

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
CTE & Prof Schs	20%	25.2%
Social Scis	24.3%	24.4%
Communications	37.9%	23.5%

Q 67 --Draw conclusions based on evidence

	% of item respondents	% scoring 9-10
Communications	37.5%	37.4%
CTE & Prof Schs	20.2%	25.2%
Social Scis	24.2%	18.3%

The highlighted items reflect a difference of 30% or more between the participation rate and the rate ranking the skill as important.

Q13 -- Faculty from CTE and professional schools, as well as faculty from natural sciences, ranked the item high in double the proportion of their overall participation, while communications faculty ranked it high at less than half the proportion of their participation.

Q24 and Q29 -- CTE and professional schools rank high again

Q31 -- CTE & professional schools rank high

Q33 – Communications ranks high

Q54 -- CTE & professional schools rank low

Q60 -- CTE & professional schools rank high

Q64 – Communications ranks low

These sorts of gaps provide a basis for discussion about the extent to which any particular skill is important to success in introductory courses from the identified subject area.

Survey Results in Context of Other Efforts

Survey results were compared to two other efforts undertaken in the state which also addressed the issue of more closely aligning high school exit expectations with college/work entry expectations.

- The first effort was an analysis by the Achieve organization of the content and performance standards of the Hawai`i Department of Education, known as Hawai`i Content and Performance Standards III (HCPS III). The state standards were compared to benchmark standards which Achieve had defined based upon best practices in other ADP states. The analysis by Achieve was reviewed by joint secondary-postsecondary Hawai`i teams who participated in two Alignment Institutes. These teams, in turn, made recommendations to the Hawai`i DOE and the DOE submitted a Quality Review Analysis in which they identified potential changes to the HCPS III.
- The second effort was a “Hawai`i Career Ready” study of local employers undertaken by Three Point Consulting. In this study, both front-line supervisors and higher level managers were asked, in focus groups, to identify skills essential to success in “career ladder” positions which might be filled by individuals who have only a high school education.

*Post-Secondary Survey Results Compared to
Achieve Analyses of HCPS Standards*

Achieve’s analysis of HCPS III standards noted a need to strengthen the standards, in particular, related to 1) informational text and 2) writing. Following discussion by participants in Achieve Alignment Institutes in Dallas (March 2007) and Minneapolis (July 2007), the Hawai`i DOE submitted its response to the Achieve analysis as part of its quality review (see Attachment E). Sections of the Hawai`i Language Arts Content and Performance Standards being reviewed as a result of this process include:

- Language
- Communication
- Writing
- Research
- Logic
- Informational Text
- Literature

Results from the post-secondary survey are consistent with this -- both reinforcing Achieve’s emphasis on writing skills and informational text, but also reinforcing the perception that additional key areas include communication, research, language and logic. Twelve of the twenty-two skills which received the greatest number of 9-10 ratings in the survey were from two areas:

- 8 deal with writing skills
- 4 deal skills related to informational text

The post-secondary surveys, however, also rate other skill areas as important for student preparation. Of the remaining ten. . .

- 3 deal with communication skills
- 3 deal with research skills
- 2 deal with language
- 2 deal with logic.

Post-Secondary Survey Results Compared to Focus Group Sessions with Employers

The focus group sessions conducted with employers identified the following as seven essential communications skills:

- Comprehend and communicate quantitative, technical, mathematical information.
- Make oral presentations with logical structure, evidence, eye contact, rate of speech.
- Participate productively in self-directed work teams.
- Organize ideas in writing with a thesis, paragraphs, transitions and conclusion.
- Produce writing that translates technical language into non-technical English.
- Interpret and use information in maps, charts, graphs, time lines, tables, diagrams.
- Draw conclusions based on evidence from informational and technical texts

Six of the seven are among the twenty-two identified as most important by the post-secondary survey results. The one exception is “make oral presentations,” which did rate as important to faculty from CTE and professional school programs, even though it did not make the “top 22.”

Conclusions

There is consistency across the three areas in the identification of essential English language skills -- Achieve’s quality review of HCAPS III, the opinions of local employers and the opinions of post-secondary faculty. This consistency should provide a strong foundation on which to align secondary education with college/career expectations.

Recommended starting places for dialogue between secondary and post-secondary English teachers who seek to define “college and career ready” skill levels would involve these twelve skills (eight writing and four informational text):

Writing

- Q 30 -- Plan writing with notes
- Q 31 -- Select and use informal/technical language
- Q 32 -- Organize writing with a thesis, etc
- Q 33 -- writing process (revise based on feedback)
- Q 34 -- Edit for grammar
- Q 35 -- Cite sources
- Q 37 -- Use Excel and Powerpoint
- Q 38 -- Write an academic essay

Informational Text

- Q 60 -- Follow written instructions
- Q 61 -- Identify main ideas in informational text

Q 64 -- Interpret maps, charts, etc

Q 67 --Draw conclusions based on evidence

Additional comments from open-ended questions which might inform our “next step” discussions include these:

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of Categorized Comments Made by Respondents

<i>Please identify any other essential benchmarks that most first-time freshmen need to be successful in your entry-level credit bearing course.</i>	Overall Total		University of Hawai'i		Private Institutions	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Q40. (Relates to Section 4: Writing)						
Reading comprehension, vocabulary	39	34.2	36	35.6	3	23.1
Critical thinking/reasoning, logic, analytical skills	14	12.3	12	11.9	2	15.4
Research skills	5	4.4	5	5.0	0	0.0
Writing skills*	11	9.6	11	10.9	0	0.0
Work ethic, note-taking, studying & time mgmt skills	16	14.0	15	14.9	1	7.7
Self- and world-awareness	1	0.9	1	1.0	0	0.0
Language/oral skills, discussion skills	7	6.1	5	5.0	2	15.4
Misc.	21	18.4	16	15.8	5	38.5
TOTAL	114	100.0	100	100.0	13	100.0
Q55. (Relates to Section 6: Logic)						
Reading comprehension, vocabulary	6	18.2	6	20.0	0	0.0
Critical thinking/reasoning, logic, analytical skills	11	33.3	8	26.7	3	100.0
Research skills	1	3.0	1	3.3	0	0.0
Writing skills*	2	6.1	2	6.7	0	0.0
Work ethic, note-taking, studying & time mgmt skills	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Self- and world-awareness	4	12.1	4	13.3	0	0.0
Language/oral skills, discussion skills	1	3.0	1	3.3	0	0.0
Misc.	8	24.2	8	26.7	0	0.0
TOTAL	33	100.0	30	100.0	3	100.0
Q71. (Relates to Section 8: Informational Text)						
Reading comprehension, vocabulary	3	9.1	3	17.6	0	0.0
Critical thinking/reasoning, logic, analytical skills	5	15.2	5	29.4	0	0.0
Research skills	1	3.0	0	0.0	1	3.1
Writing skills*	2	6.1	2	11.8	0	0.0
Work ethic, note-taking, studying & time mgmt skills	1	3.0	0	0.0	1	3.1
Self- and world-awareness	1	3.0	1	5.9	0	0.0
Language/oral skills, discussion skills	14	42.4	2	11.8	12	37.5
Misc.	6	18.2	4	23.5	2	6.2
TOTAL	33	100.0	17	100.0	16	100.0
Q73. (Relates to Section 9: English subject strands)						
Reading comprehension, vocabulary	6	16.2	5	14.3	1	50.0
Critical thinking/reasoning, logic, analytical skills	1	2.7	0	0.0	1	50.0
Research skills	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Writing skills*	4	10.8	4	11.4	0	0.0
Work ethic, note-taking, studying & time mgmt skills	8	21.6	8	22.9	0	0.0
Self- and world-awareness	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Language/oral skills, discussion skills	4	10.8	4	11.4	0	0.0
Misc.	14	37.8	14	40.00	0	0.0
TOTAL	37	100.0	35	100.0	2	100.0

*Outlining, grammar, spelling, word meaning, editing, proof-reading

This version has no attachments. The missing attachments include the following and are available by contacting Kathy Jaycox at Jaycox@hawaii.edu or 956-7678.

- Attachment A Campus Participation Data (1 page)
- Attachment B Course Specifics (2 pages)
- Attachment C Item-by-item data about low and high scores by subject area
(29 pages)
- Attachment D Frequency Distribution of Responses (14 pages)
- Attachment E Achieve side-by-side analysis of HCPS III with commentary
(26 pages)