

Achieving Equitable Outcomes in Gateway Courses: Results of a Yearlong Research-Practice Partnership

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How do we improve outcomes in gateway courses?

The Equity and Digital Learning Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) sought to identify specific pedagogical practices that improve equity in gateway courses. Led by Every Learner Everywhere and facilitated by Achieving the Dream, APLU, and Digital Promise, five colleges and universities who applied to join the program were identified to work on improving pedagogy in areas such as communication, English, math, and science.

Harper College was selected as one of the five institutions, with the Academy for Teaching Excellence coordinating the team. English 101 and 102 (Composition I and II) were chosen at the target courses for review and redesign. Two instructors, one full-time and one adjunct, were chosen for each course, for four total member faculty on the team. The RPP focused on the 2021-22 academic year.

PROCESS

The Harper RPP group used multiple strategies to identify, share, and assess equitable pedagogy practices, including professional development facilitated by faculty and organizational leaders from and outside of Harper.



DATA COLLECTION

Digital Promise collected institutional data (e.g., student characteristics, pass rates) and distributed surveys to students in ENG 101 and 102 in Spring 2021, Fall 2021, and Spring 2022. Student surveys included questions related to teaching practices, classroom climate, interactions with the instructor and other students. Student surveys also offered students broader identification options related gender and race than institutional data.

RPP-WIDE INITIATIVES

Why is it important for faculty to employ culturally relevant teaching practices?

[Cultural Diversity: Dr. Geneva Gay](#)



Dr. Geneva Gay from the University of Washington, Seattle answers the question "Why is it important for faculty to employ culturally responsive teaching practices?"

Harris, F & Wood, L. (2020). Employing Equity-Minded and Culturally-Affirming Teaching and Learning Practices in Virtual Learning Communities.

[Equity-Minded and Culturally-Affirming Teaching and Learning Practices in Virtual Learning Communities - NIU - Keep Teaching](#)

Kelly, R. (2020). Top 7 trends in digital learning innovation. Campus Technology.

The RPP hosted a **Digital Justice Faculty Learning Circle** and curated live and on-demand resources and workshops to support faculty development across the five institutions. Professional development topics included syllabus review, culturally responsive design, and responding to student resistance.

HARPER INITIATIVES

1) As an instructor, how have you reflected on your own [identities](#) and educational experiences, and how these may affect your teaching?

For example, your own identity development is essential to your ability to facilitate instruction in ways that are relevant to students' backgrounds and experiences. Also, your conceptions and goals for education are important for creating experiences that support intellectual engagement and generate sociopolitical awareness for democratic participation. Reflect on how your identity development and experiences have shaped your conceptions and goals for students' educational experiences.

Why this is included: Self-reflection on one's identities and experiences helps inform how a person approaches their facilitation. The chapter on [Identity, Teaching, and Learning](#) from [Walking the Equity Talk](#) by John Robert Browne II explores the importance of identity development for educators.

Please type your reflections here.

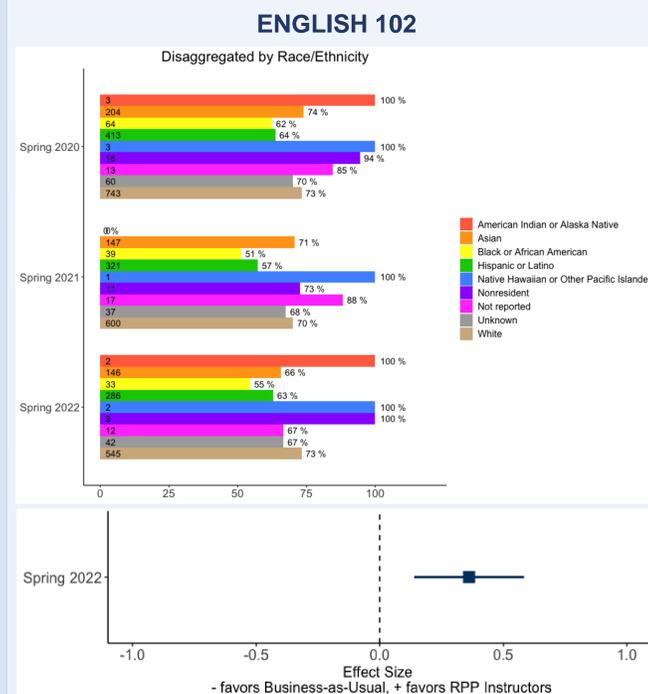
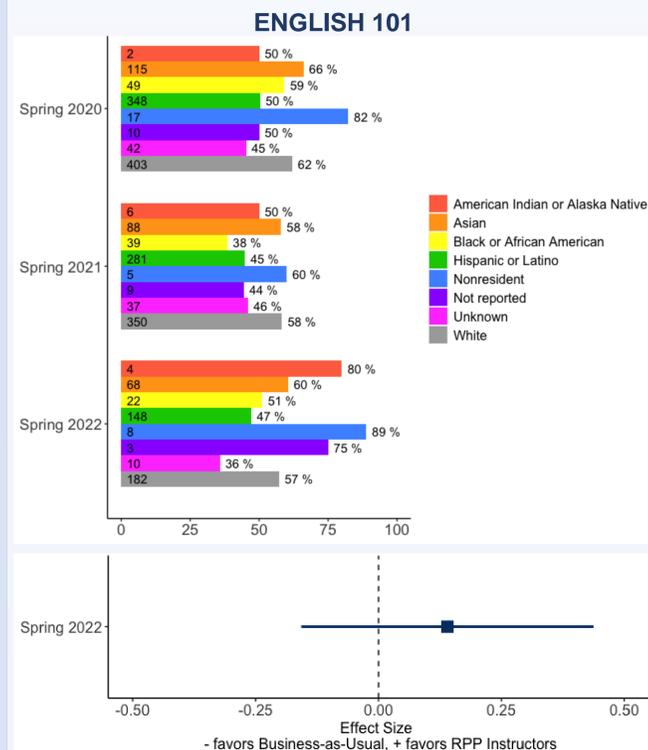
Share examples or links to any representative artifacts (materials, activities, and other content) relevant to your reflection here. You can share links to documents you have created by saving them in OneDrive and creating a link to share here that is set so others can view it. Click the share button in the upper right corner to create a link and adjust the permission settings.

The Harper team met biweekly to identify opportunities to redesign their ENG 101 and 102 courses and to support the implementation of professional development for themselves and other faculty. A key initiative was the rollout of the **Equity Teaching Academy**, a three-part series of Graduate Equivalency Courses offered through the Academy for Teaching Excellence. RPP faculty alternately participated in and facilitated aspects of the Equity Teaching Academy to support their own professional development and offer feedback on the series' ongoing development.

Harper faculty also used the **Enacting Equity Course Review Tool** to consider specific dimensions of teaching such as communicating across dimensions of identity, diverse representation, offering support for full participation, and designing assessments in ways relevant to diverse learners.

RESULTS

Pass rates were compared between Spring 2021 and Spring 2022, and between RPP instructors and non-RPP instructors. The graphs below show: 1) unadjusted pass rate by racial/ethnic group by semester; and 2) the model-adjusted pass rate for RPP faculty compared to their non-RPP peers. Model-adjusted rates account for student factors such as race, Pell eligibility, and age.



- **Outcomes improved for most groups from Spring 2021 to Spring 2022.**
- **Compared to peers, RPP faculty pass rates were higher in ENG 102.**

DISCUSSION

Pass rates and student descriptions of their experiences in courses showed promising improvements when comparing Spring 2021 (at the outset of the RPP) to Spring 2022, and among RPP faculty when compared to their non-RPP peers. In particular, the model-adjust pass rate was statistically significantly higher among ENG 102 students who worked with RPP faculty compared to non-RPP faculty. Furthermore, student survey results showed higher rates of use of inclusive pedagogies and positive classroom climate among RPP faculty than non-RPP faculty.

Further use of the Equity Teaching Academy, Enacting Equity Guidelines, and other faculty development initiatives may reveal what enables instructors to create more inclusive classroom climates. Collecting and comparing pass rates across years may obscure other factors, so other methodologies such as classroom observations and student focus groups and interviews may further highlight what pedagogies best support equity in learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful for the financial and programmatic support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Every Learner Everywhere, Digital Promise, Achieving the Dream (ATD), and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU).

This work would have been impossible without our English faculty team members: Andre Berchiolly, Simona Bonica, Ana Contreras, and Stephanie Whalen.