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Indian Prairie School District 204 On-line Courses Report Spring Semester 2009



Institute For On-line Learning

Frontier Campus

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Naperville, Illinois 60564



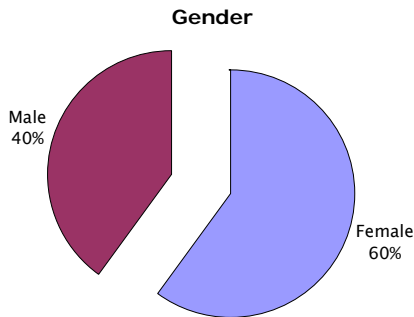
The second semester's activities of the on-line course initiative are summarized in this report.

A two-semester summary is included, as well as the results of an end-of-course survey, other activities, and goals.

Spring 2009 Courses

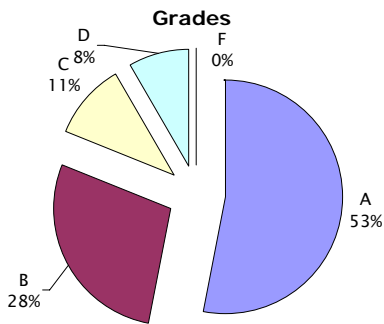
During the Spring Semester, eighty-five (85) students took Indian Prairie's on-line courses: Consumer Economics, Health, and English IV AP. The results of these course offerings are outlined below.

The students:



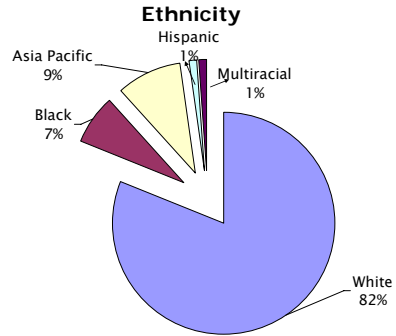
The majority of students in the classes were Female (60%).

Their grades (in this semester's on-line courses):

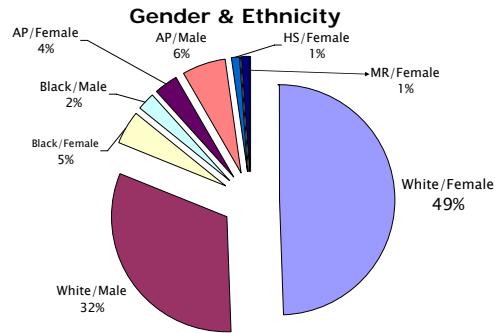


A very large number (92%) of the students passed, letter grades "A," "B," or "C", their courses this semester.

The ethnicity of the students:



Students in the on-line courses were predominantly White.

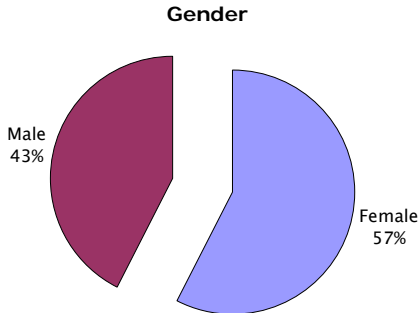


When combining gender and ethnicity, the largest group of students that took classes during this semester was White/Female (49%). Later in this report, this data will be combined with an end-of-course survey question to offer a broad insight about the students. Further investigation of this data during subsequent semesters will allow the program to identify participation groups and trends, as well as locate participation gaps so that strategies can be developed to address them.

Two Semester Summary

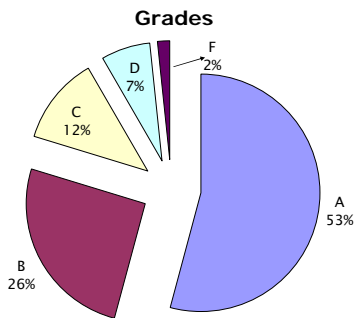
During the two semesters that tracking and reporting have occurred, 183 students took Indian Prairie's on-line classes. The two-semester summary follows.

The students:



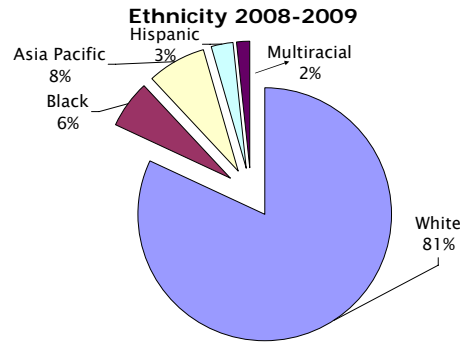
More females (57%) than males (43%) took on-line courses during the first two semesters of tracking participation.

Their grades (in on-line courses):

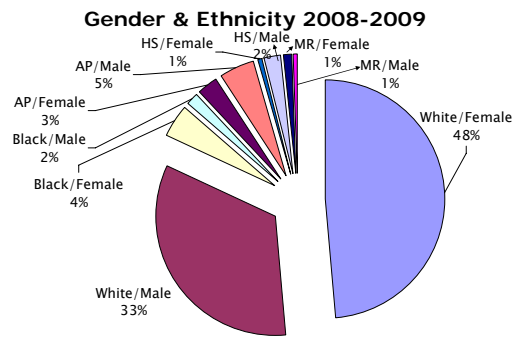


A large number (91%) of students passed their courses with an "A," "B," or "C" grade.

The ethnicity of the students:



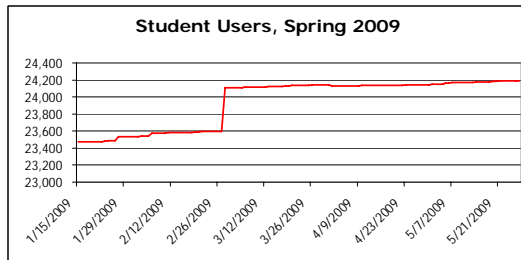
The ethnicity of the participants was largely White (81%).



The two-semester demographic analysis, including gender and ethnicity, indicates that the White/Female (48%) category is the largest group that participates in on-line courses.

Blackboard

Blackboard continued to be the learning management system for on-line courses and to for teachers across the district to post course materials, use wikis and blogs, and generally extend their classrooms beyond their schools. The user count continued to increase during the year. The accompanying graph displays the users during this semester.



On-line Research

The on-line program is using the research of Margaret Roblyer, University of Tennessee, to provide insights on the organization and development of the district's on-line program. She has developed a survey to predict a student's "Probability of Passing" (POP). The factors that weigh heaviest in her research are the student's grade point average (GPA) and whether the student has a computer at home to complete the work. Essentially, good students in traditional classes are predicted to be good students on-line. For students who have low GPAs, Dr. Roblyer states that instructors may need to provide additional assistance, especially during the first two weeks of class when this group may give up or have their interests quickly wane.

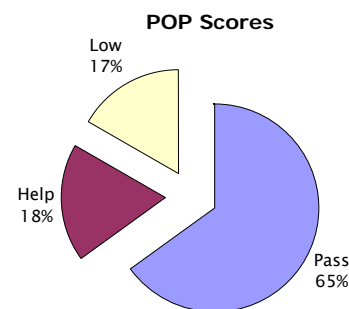
Another important factor is age. That is, age does not appear to be a factor for success in the on-line environment for adolescent learners.

The use of this survey is not to eliminate students from on-line courses. It is to serve as another information source for counselors to advise students during course registration.

In late January 2009, Roblyer's POP survey was opened on *Blackboard* for high school students to complete. Announcements were sent to their school email accounts about the survey

and the reason for its use. One hundred, sixty-three (163) students completed the survey. A large number of students (83%) had POP scores that indicated they could pass an on-line course, some (18%) may need extra help. The individuals who scored lowest may have other indicators that show they can be successful on-line.

The accompanying chart shows the POP scores of the students who took during the survey.



For completeness, it should be noted that a large number (108) of students started the survey but did not finish it.

School District Partners

On May 7, 2009, District 204 hosted three school districts that are either teaching on-line courses or they are planning courses. In addition to Indian Prairie, Naperville School District 203, St. Charles District 303, and Niles Township High School District 219 participated in the event. Approximately 25 teachers and administrators were present. The day consisted of presentations by Terri Rowenhorst of the Monterey Institute and by District 204's on-line instructors James Janota and Laura Kurtyak.

The school districts met in February to discuss the status of on-line courses

in the participants' districts. At that time, the group decided that teachers needed to meet and to discuss the issues around on-line learning.

Professional Development

Wimba Classroom: Current on-line teachers and prospective on-line teachers and participated in virtual classroom professional development on February 5, 2009 and February 12, 2009.

Gwinnett County Online School: Dr. Matt Waymack, director of the Gwinnett County Online School, presented to a group of District 204 faculty on February 24, 2009. Dr. Waymack advised the participants of issues with on-line classes, such as exam integrity and homework.

District 204: Professional development for current on-line teachers occurred informally. A course has been created on *Blackboard* for documentation and communication.

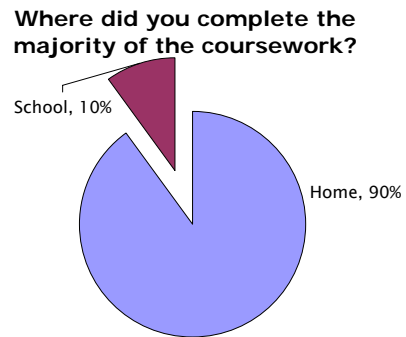
Legislation

The Institute's director worked with an initiative in the Illinois General Assembly. The legislation, known under its Bill status as HB2448, was designed to establish "a remote educational program." While the Bill requires a Board of Education to create a framework, the benefit for District 204 is that students participating in on-line courses can be counted in the district's General State Aid. By semester's end, the bill cleared the General Assembly, awaiting Governor Quinn's signature.

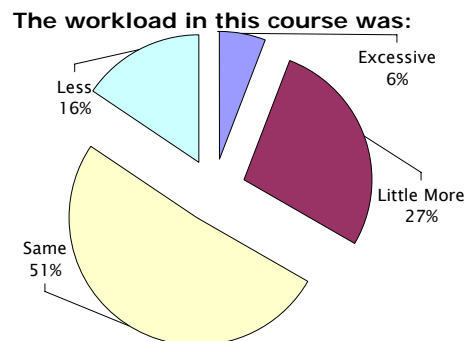
End-of-Course Survey

Fifty-one (51) students responded to the semester's end-of-course survey. The survey was available in *Blackboard*. Consumer Economics students logged into a special survey site in Blackboard. (The Consumer Economics Course is currently housed at Western Illinois University. The course will be redeveloped and installed on the district's learning management system during the summer of 2010.) Survey results were organized by course and aggregated. Individual course results were returned to the courses' teachers for review and future action. The aggregated results are reported here.

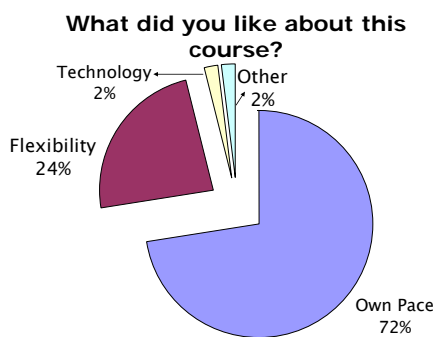
The results of the survey:



Seniors reported that they did most of their work at home while some of the health students worked at school.



A large number of students (84%) reported that the course workload was at least as much as traditional face-to-face courses. This result is important to note because on-line courses are perceived to have less work than traditional courses. This question is a quality indicator. The students are reporting that the on-line classes have similar requirements to their traditional classes.



This question shows that a large number of students (96%) like the personalization of on-line learning, in that they can decide when to work and the pace at which they work.

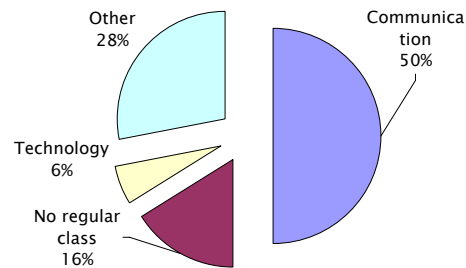
A student's comment:

I can focus on other, harder homework during the week and focus more weekend time on my health assignments.

More importantly, the answers to this question -- coupled with the earlier data about gender and ethnicity -- indicate that the students in the district's on-line classes are not "a group of loner, geeky boys who take the classes for the technology." The trend, after two semesters, is that on-line classes are being taken those in the White/Female category who want to personalize their

learning. This is a major insight about the program's participants. Aggregation of the data, as course offerings increase and participation increases, will indicate whether the perceived hypothesis emerges or whether the current participation pattern holds.

What did you dislike about this course?



A large number of students (66%) report that they disliked the course because of communication and no regular class.

Students' comments:

- *I really didn't like being alone all this period - and the pace, it is just too fast to really remember anything. I also don't like that we have to stay in school during this class - it is considered option. I also don't like the technology - most of the documents would not work at my house.*
- *I wasn't ready for the in class tests which really brought down my grade.*
- *Just a few issues with blackboard's stability.*

- *Classmates not helping in group projects.*
- *My lack of focus made it difficult for me.*
- *I didn't really dislike anything; this class really showed me how awesome online courses are.*

The details in this question will help the program improve. Discussion of this question with the on-line teachers identified the following insights:

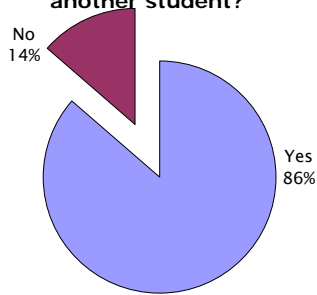
- Students are adjusting to the modality of learning where there is no daily class.
- Students likely have more responsibility for their learning on-line than in a traditional class, where the teacher provides detailed instructions and may repeat them.
- Students may not be checking their course frequently enough. This leads to missed deadlines.
- Students communicate with electronic text and *Facebook*, not through email. When some students get nearly immediate response through electronic text, a 24-hour promise to return communication from teachers may be perceived as too long. On May 25, 2009, *The New York Times* reported that the average teenager sends over 2,200 text messages a month, nearly double from the previous year. While beyond the scope of this project, District 204 may have to look at ways to communicate with students in this modality.

The following strategies will be used in future semesters:

- The District 204 email account should be the official email account for on-line courses. This will allow emails to be sent through *Blackboard* to the entire group.
- Investigate adding the *Blackboard Building Block* to synchronize course content with a student's *Facebook* account.
- Continue to expand the use of *Wimba Classroom* so that students have regular contact with their classmates and the course's instructor.
- Continue to restate reasonable response expectations with students.
- Consider redesigning the group project in Consumer Economics.
- Communicate directly with ineffective groups, perhaps requiring face-to-face meetings.
- Introduce group members to each other at the orientation meetings.
- Require that communication among group members occur in the courses' discussion boards rather than through other on-line media.

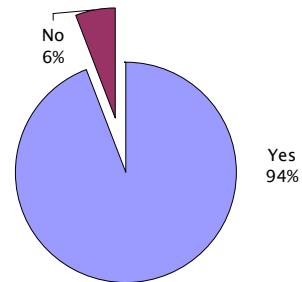
The results of this question are a major issue of the program. Communication must improve. The reasons identified above along with the strategies listed may lead to desired improvements. Like the workload question above, this question is a major quality indicator. Teacher-to-student communication and student-to-student are important.

Would you recommend this class to another student?



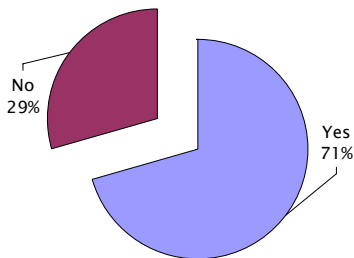
A large number of students (86%) reported that they would recommend their on-line class to another student.

Was help available to you if you needed it?



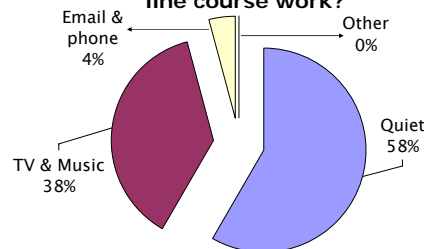
A large number (94%) reported that help was available when it was needed. The type of help was with the course content or with the technology.

Would you take another class on-line?



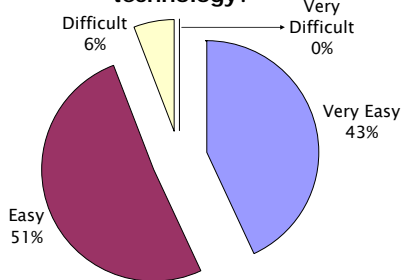
While a smaller positive result than the previous question, a large number of students (71%) stated they would take another class on-line.

What type of environment do you set for yourself when completing on-line course work?



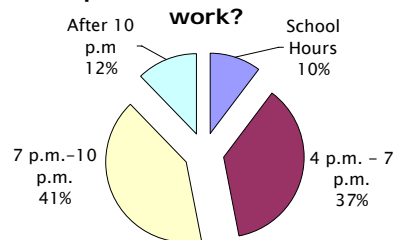
The popular press reports that teenagers are multitasking during study times, such as playing games, sending text messages to their friends, and participating in other on-line activities. The majority of students (58%) reported that they seek quiet places when working on their electronic courses.

How easy was it to use the technology?



On-line courses rely on several technologies. Nearly all the students (94%) reported that the technologies were easy to use.

What time of the day do you complete most of the course work?



Most students (78%) completed their on-line work during traditional study times after school hours and during early evening. The number of students (10%) completed their work during school time is consistent with the question about where the work was completed.

Goals Report

From the Fall Semester 2008 report

- The courses for 2009-2010 are: 20th Century Literature, Astronomy, Consumer Economics, Health, and U.S. History
- Roblyer's survey results reported here were presented to guidance departments for advising.
- Formal *Wimba Classroom* staff development occurred in February 2009
- Dr. Matt Waymack from the Gwinnett County Online School presented to District 204 faculty on February 24, 2009.
- Professional development for current on-line teachers occurred informally.
- The student satisfaction survey was completed, implemented and analyzed in this report
- Two *Blackboard* professional development series were presented in May and early June 2009.

Goals for Summer Semester 2009

- Complete course development for 20th Century Literature, Astronomy and U.S. History.

- Present two *Blackboard* professional development series (6 hours each) for District 204 faculty.
- Develop a marketing plan for the 2010-2011 school year that can be implemented early in the 2009-2010 school year.
- Begin development of an on-line government course for the summer 2010.
- Begin development of the mathematics series for implementation in summer 2010.
- Add and implement the *Blackboard Building Block* that allows students to connect their courses to their *Facebook* pages.
- Develop a Board Policy consistent with the approved Illinois General Assembly legislation about "remote educational programs."
- Edit the end-of-course survey for use during the summer Consumer Economics course.

On-going Goals

- Develop strategies to reduce the issues identified in the student survey about communication and the classroom setting.
- Continue to identify participation patterns (gender and ethnicity) to map trends to determine strategies to address any participation gaps among the district's students.