

DeKalb High School Freshman Academy Proposal

November 2, 2010

Alignment of Freshman Academy Goals

Per the narrative contained in the restructuring plan the rationale for the Freshman Academy is the following: University of Chicago researcher Elaine Allensworth (2005), along with others has found that the first-year high school grades are the best predictors of whether students will succeed in the rest of their high school career. Students who fail more than half of their freshmen classes and would need substantial interventions to graduate represent the biggest category of ninth graders who ultimately drop out of school. However, students who only fail a few classes are also at high risk of not graduating. Allensworth's research found that failing just one semester-long class in the freshmen year decreases the likelihood of graduating by 25 percent.

Allensworth's findings are supported by data from DeKalb High School. With this in mind, teachers at DeKalb High School have begun planning a freshman academy to address both academics and a sense of belonging as students bridge from middle school to high school. The goal of the freshmen academy would be to make sure that all freshmen students are prepared with the skills to be successful in the regular college-preparatory classes the sophomore year.

The goals of the DHS Freshman Academy are:

- To ease and support the transition from 8th grade to 9th grade and beyond
- To build relationships with students through smaller learning communities
- To enhance the core curriculum
- To promote student engagement during the school day and beyond
- To decrease failures, attendance problems (loss of credit), and discipline referrals

The goals of the Freshman Academy align with the District Strategic Goals (student learning, stakeholder satisfaction, employee development, system alignment, and fiscal responsibility). In the discussions regarding the development and implementation of a freshman academy, the focus has been on implementing research-based best practices that are student centered. There has been stakeholder input with parent and/community members serving on the freshman academy oversight committee. There will be a need for professional development regarding instructional strategies that are focused on encouraging engagement in the core. How to continue to support the freshmen has been discussed to create a DHS culture that embraces support and interventions available to all DHS students. The realization of fiscal

responsibility has been a focus as the Freshman Academy oversight committee has looked at the freshmen school day and how this will impact staffing. It is very important that resources (time, money, people, etc) be utilized efficiently.

The District Improvement Plan addresses the achievement gap in the areas of reading and math and the decline of students making AYP on the PSAE. The Freshman Academy will support the areas of reading and math through the increased presence of literacy throughout the core curriculum and electives and through the math interventionist. Through the use of common formative assessments that are currently being used as a program evaluation tool, the core will be improved so that students are able to master the standards that the core is aligned to. Once the core curriculum has the rigor and is aligned to the standards, students can master the core as students know what is expected of them. Those students who have skill deficits in math, can be identified and supported as needed through the use of the math interventionist. Students, who are identified as needing support in literacy through assessment are placed in the appropriate level course. The work in the PLTs of aligning the curriculum to the standards, defining targets, and creating assessments that are aligned to the targets is meant to strengthen the core and improve teaching and learning for all students.

The DHS/NIU Partnership through a community forum in February 2009, determined that the following criteria identify “What DHS graduates should be able to do to succeed in the 21st century?”

- Be of good character
- Have strong academic skills
- Have a global perspective/be multilingual
- Think critically and problem-solve
- Be scientifically literate
- Think creatively
- Engage actively in community life
- Work well with others
- Prepare for further education and career
- Use technology effectively and beneficially

The focus on building relationships with the freshmen will address several of the above criteria, along with strengthening the core instruction. The instructional coaches will be instrumental in working with the selected freshman academy teachers to ensure that the learning environment is supportive but also encourages students to think critically and to problem solve. The ability to take electives within the Freshman Academy is an opportunity for students to use their thinking skills in another manner.

The Social Emotional Standards will be addressed within the Freshman Academy. The Freshman Academy will focus on self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success through an advisory period (flex period) and/or Freshman Fridays. Students will learn to accurately assess their abilities and interests, build on their strengths, and make effective use of family, school and community resources. The freshmen will learn how to access and use resources to support their emotional and social needs. A system/program will be in place to help freshmen set priorities, build on their strengths, and use positive adult role models to help them reach their full potential. Students will learn strategies to help them be successful both academically and personally. The freshmen will use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships throughout their DHS experience and beyond. Effective communication and social skills will be targeted for the freshmen. Students will learn to evaluate/reflect upon their communication and social interactions with their peers and adults. Making good choices/decisions and learning responsible behavior will be an essential part of the Freshman Academy advisory period (flex period) and/or Freshman Fridays. Students will learn how decisions impact their daily lives personally, at school, and/or in the community.

The seven components of the 3TM Framework:

- PLTs
- Essential course content
- Consistent course syllabi and planning
- Multi-tiered system of support
- Common formative assessment
- School-wide PBIS
- Parent and community involvement

The Freshmen Academy will have in place the multi-tiered system of support. All students will have a support period and students that need interventions will have access to the math

interventionist through placement in a study hall which they can flex in and out of as needed. The Freshman Academy teachers will receive professional development in effective, research-based instructional practices. Through the work in the PLTs, the core curriculum will be strengthened (through deconstructing standards and the creation of common formative assessments [CFAs]). CFAs are currently being used as a program evaluation tool. PBIS will be an integral part of Freshman Academy. Parent and community involvement/communication will play an important role in the success of the Freshman Academy.

The Restructuring plan aligns with the goals of the Freshman Academy. The ability to make data-based decisions through the use of common formative assessments is critical. Vertical articulation for teachers in math, science, Humanities English, and social studies will allow for on-going communication to occur between the 8th grade and 9th grade teachers. Transition assessments have been developed that will point out where the gaps in learning are occurring for the freshmen. Literacy is a core class within the Freshman Academy. The freshmen teachers will work to prepare students for their sophomore year and beyond. The math interventionist will work to provide interventions to those students that have been identified. Supports for students in all areas will be available, as well. Freshmen students with IEPs will continue to receive the core curriculum plus more as designated within their IEP. The ELL students will receive literacy support through a sheltered literacy course. It is important for the incoming freshmen that are at risk that SOAR (summer bridge program) continue next summer. The check-in and grade monitoring portion of this will continue during the Flex period. PBIS will continue in the Freshman Academy. Freshman Academy teachers and staff will strengthen communication with parents.

Addressing the Social Emotional Learning Standards

Just as academic skills are essential to a student's success, so are social emotional skills and attitudes, particularly for freshmen in order to start their high school career positively. Counselors have developed and implemented what is known as "Freshman Fridays" for the last three years. This form of instruction is currently taking place during the lunch study halls once a week. With the proposed new school schedule, these lunch study halls will no longer exist, but the social emotional curriculum must still be delivered. Additionally, PBIS ChecknConnect has been occurring during the lunch study halls. This system has proven to be highly effective in helping our identified SOAR students achieve academically. Periodically, ChecknConnect will now be able to be implemented during our FLEX time.

Freshman Academy will address the following learning standards not only through the development of solid, positive relationships between teachers and students, but also through the periodic use of FLEX time in order to provide direct instruction of these social emotional skills. In addition to counselors and PBIS teams periodically using FLEX time for this purpose, we are working on all Freshman Academy teachers integrating these learning standards into their classrooms.

Illinois Social Emotional Learning Standards

Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

- A. Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.
- B. Recognize personal qualities and external supports.
- C. Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

- A. Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.
- B. Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.
- C. Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
- D. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

- A. Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.
- B. Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.
- C. Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.

SOAR and ChecknConnect

2009-2010

50 Freshmen students identified as needing additional supports

17 students who were identified as needing support but chose none earned an average of 2.7 credits

10 students who attended only SOAR earned an average of 3.3 credits

15 students who attended only the check in with grade check earned an average of 5.2 credits

8 students who attended both SOAR and check in with grade check earned an average of 5.1 credits

2009-2010 Credits Earned/Credits Lost

Class of 2013

(During Freshmen Year 2009 – 2010)

Credits Earned	# of Students
<2 credits	26 students
2-2.5	11 students
3-3.5	15 students
4-4.5	20 students
5-5.5	61 students
≥6	324 students

Credits Lost	# of students
0	293
.5	51
1	29
1.5	25
2	16
2.5	7
3	9
3.5	9
4-4.5	9
5-5.5	8
6	1

164/457 students lost at least one ½ credit

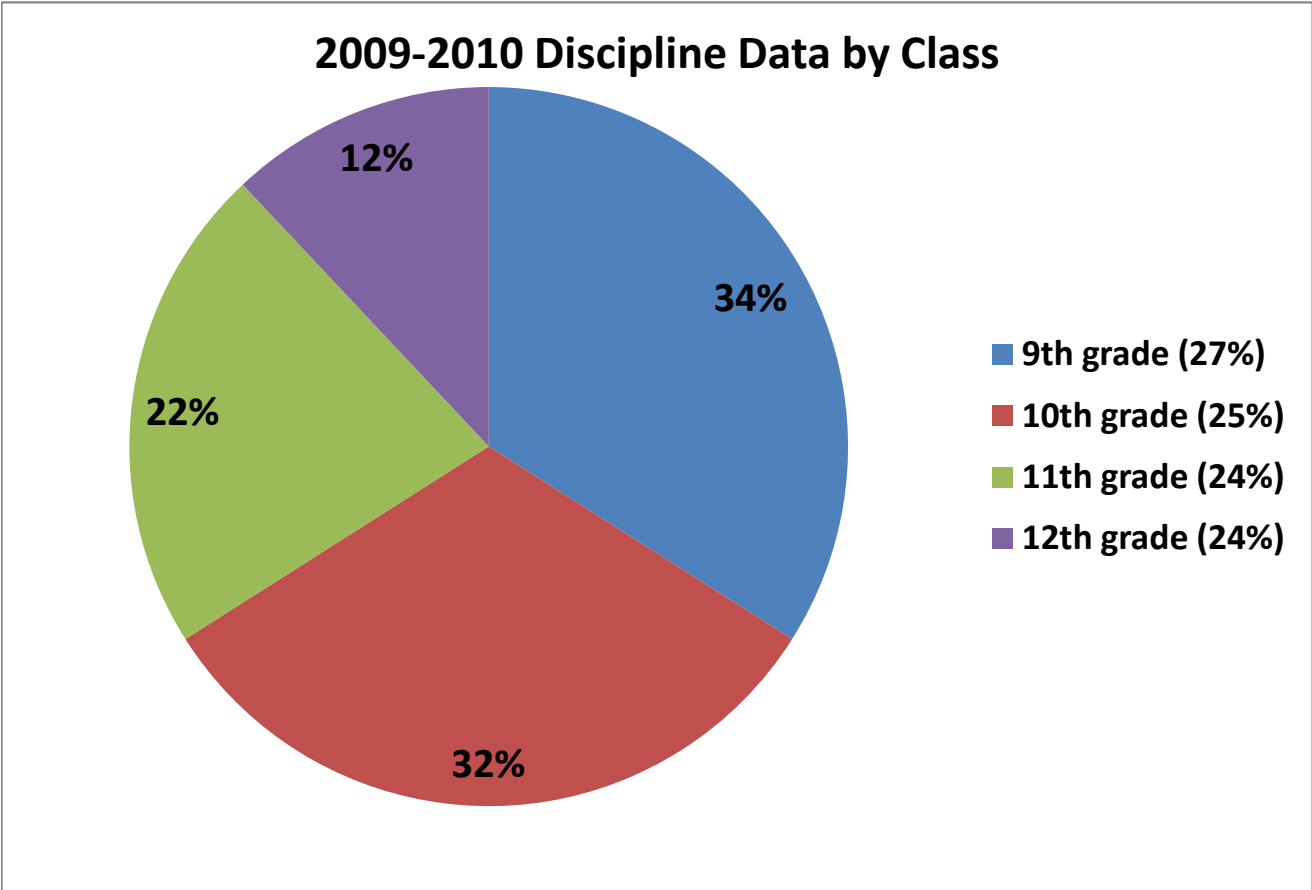
36% of freshmen lost at least one ½ credit

23% of freshmen failed at least one class

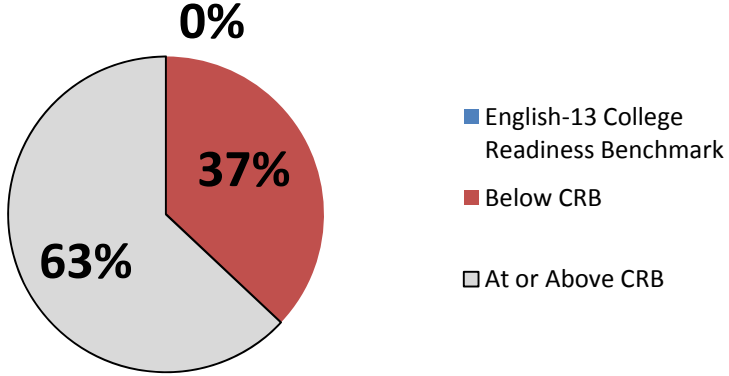
17% failed at least one semester of Humanities English

30% failed at least one semester of math

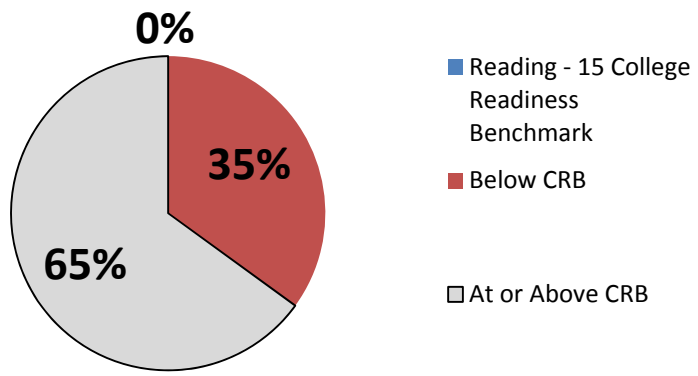
2009-2010 Discipline data



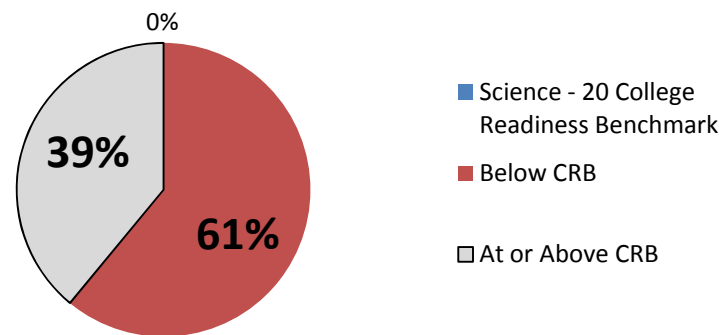
Class of 2014 English EXPLORE Scores



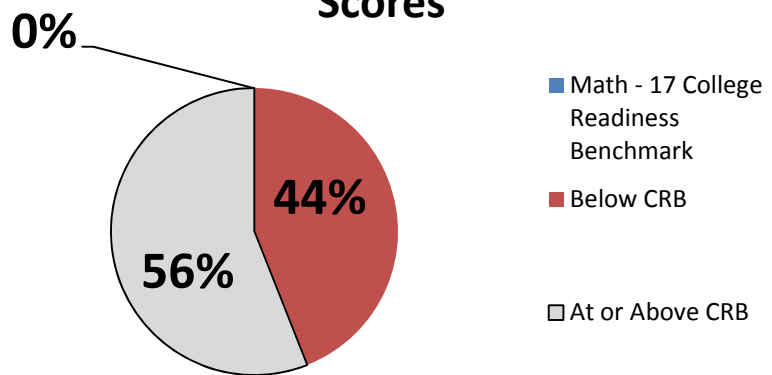
Class of 2014 Reading EXPLORE Scores



Class of 2014 Science EXPLORE Scores



Class of 2014 Math EXPLORE Scores



CRBs indicate 75% chance of earning a C in a college entry course and a 50% chance of earning B or better

FRESHMAN ACADEMY PROJECTIONS

				Seat max 35-Core Seat max 28-Science					Seat max 30-Core Seat max 28-Science					Seat max 28 Core & Science classes	
Content Area	# of Current Freshmen	# of Teacher Sections	Average Class Size			# of Teacher Sections	Average Class Size			# of Teacher Sections	Average Class Size			# of Teacher Sections	Average Class Size
Social Studies	216	7	30.9			8	27.0			8	27.0			8	27.0
Algebra	331	10	33.1			12	27.6			12	27.6			12	27.6
Geometry	45	2	22.5			2	22.5			2	22.5			2	22.5
Honors Geometry	51	2	25.5			2	25.5			2	25.5			2	25.5
Biology	99	4	24.8			4	24.8			4	24.8			4	24.8
Earth Space	314	12	26.2			12	26.2			12	26.2			12	26.2
Humanities English I	356	11	32.4			12	29.7			13	27.4			13	27.4
Honors Hum. Eng I	57	2	28.5			2	28.5			3	19.0			3	19.0
Academic Literacy	165	5	33.0			6	27.5			6	27.5			6	27.5
HS Literacy	118	4	29.5			4	29.5			5	23.6			5	23.6
Foundations of Literacy	10	1	10.0			1	10.0			1	10.0			1	10.0

Projected Staffing Increases due to the creation of a Freshman Academy. Seat max would remain at 35 for Core classes. Science classes have a seat max of 28.

(Staffing increases are a result of “pure” freshman classes. The exceptions would be Honors Geometry and Foundations of Literacy. Both these classes would contain a small number of sophomores.)

Social Studies	+0.2 FTE	
Math	+0.4 FTE	
Hum. Eng.	+0.2 FTE	
Science	+0.2 FTE	
Literacy	+0.0 FTE	Total increase: 1.0 FTE

Projected Staffing Increases if seat max is lowered from 35 to 30 in Core classes. Science classes maintain a seat max of 28.

Social Studies	+0.4 FTE	
Math	+0.8 FTE	
Hum. Eng.	+0.4 FTE	
Science	+0.2 FTE	
Literacy	+0.2 FTE	Total increase: 2.0 FTE

Projected Staffing Increases if seat max is lowered to 28 in all freshman classes.

Social Studies	+0.4 FTE	
Math	+0.8 FTE	
Hum. Eng.	+0.8 FTE	
Science	+0.2 FTE	
Literacy	+0.4 FTE	Total increase: 2.6 FTE

Means of Measuring Effectiveness of Freshman Academy

- 1. Credits Earned**
- 2. EPAS Scores**
- 3. Attendance and Discipline Data**
- 4. Social Emotional Standards:**
 - High School Student Survey of Engagement**
 - PLAN Supplemental Items**