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THE SQUEAKY WHEEL GETS THE GREASE: AP STUDENTS ASK FOR MORE CRITICAL READING AND WRITING AND LESS TEST PREPARATION

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THE SQUEAKY WHEEL GETS THE GREASE:
AP STUDENTS ASK FOR MORE CRITICAL READING AND WRITING
AND LESS TEST PREPARATION

An Essay Submitted to the
Graduate School of
John Carroll University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts

During my first few years as a high school English teacher, I received an abrupt introduction to the world of Advanced Placement (AP) courses. In my third year of teaching, I was slapped with the responsibility of teaching Advanced Placement English Language and Composition—a brand new course for the district. My only experience with the AP program had been with a few courses I had taken myself in high school and only scored modestly. While I was excited and flattered to be asked to teach higher-performing students, I was also nervous knowing the students’ results of the AP English exam determined whether or not they could receive college credit for the First Year Composition (FYC) classes at their college or university of choice. Questioning my qualifications was only the beginning of a search for how best to prepare my students for college, leading me to examine the AP English program from multiple perspectives.

Unfortunately for AP students, my story is a common one for most AP teachers. Few AP English teachers, as David Joliffe argues in his essay, “Advanced Placement English and College Composition: Can’t We All Get Along?,” have had the appropriate coursework to teach students how to write in a college setting. Like most of the teachers Joliffe describes, I had been trained well in my undergraduate degree in literature, reading, grammar, and composition, but as Joliffe insists for most teachers in my position, the “principles and terminology of rhetoric [were] foreign” to me (67). Often during that first year of teaching AP Language, I felt I was learning how to master these rhetorical concepts, barely keeping a step ahead of my own students. Besides being what many would consider to be ill-prepared for a job that affects students obtaining coveted college credit (and hopefully a better handle in the transition to college-level

writing), high school teachers are inundated with larger class sizes, grading workload, and pressures of standardized testing in the form of state standards, not to mention preparing for the AP test itself.

The worlds of high school English classes and college reading and writing classrooms are vastly different from one another, though the former claims to exist to prepare for the latter. In their study “Closing the Gap Between High School Writing Instruction and College Writing Expectations,” Susan Fanetti, Kathy Bushrow, and David DeWeese insist that most college professors, including writing teachers, complain that “their first order of business is to help students unlearn [the] rules and skills that might have served them well in high school” (80). As a result, according to Tom Thompson and Andrea Gallagher in “When a College Professor and a High School Teacher Read the Same Papers,” many first-year college students, including former AP students, often find it difficult to shift from a world of standards and checklists to what can seem like nebulous writing expectations that vary from instructor to instructor (27). This collision of learning goals on either side of the aisle leads to the question that if these students are doing well enough in high school to earn FYC credit, how well do they perform once in the actual college atmosphere? Are these claims of stereotypical high school writing applicable to the AP English classroom?

Much of the current literature on the subject of using AP English to prepare students for college suggests that it is not practical to replace first-year composition (FYC) with the AP program. Replacing the FYC course, such as John Carroll University’s EN 125, with AP, can be a disservice both to the student and their future professors. The literature suggests that the AP

program creates what many professors see as remedial work for those teaching 200-level classes and beyond by sending forth students not fully prepared for college expectations. Unfortunately, the “current” literature on the effectiveness of the AP program is a decade old, and in that time, the courses and tests have changed in many ways to respond to the criticism it has received. To continue to judge the program without acknowledging the changes made in recent years would be a disservice to all stakeholders (high schools, colleges, and their respective students and instructors), especially given the increasingly competitive process college admissions has become. As Susan Fanetti and others confirm, “ever-increasing numbers of high school graduates are attending college—indeed, a college education is a requirement for most career-oriented jobs” (77). And, not only has the need for a college education increased, but so has the price tag and the idea of outsourcing FYC through either the AP program or competing dual enrollment courses.

Despite its challenges and downsides, I guided students through rich experiences with the AP program, first as a teacher and test reader, and now as a graduate student interested in how best to continue to prepare high school students for college on an ever increasingly competitive educational landscape. This belief in the capabilities of the AP program, along with discovering the lack of current literature on its effectiveness, leads me to my focus for this project: how can writing teachers better bridge the gap for incoming John Carroll students and their respective high school AP English courses? While students may obtain credit for John Carroll’s EN 125 course through an AP test score of 4 or 5, do these students feel ready for college level reading and writing once immersed in the academic environment at JCU? If so, what specifically

prepares them that can be used as a recommendation for future students and instructors? If not, what is lacking that can be used to modify high school AP and EN 125 curricula appropriately?

Drawing from research of area high schools that feed into John Carroll University, I noticed a dueling set of objectives in high school English curricula: one that primes the student richly for their college reading and writing experiences, but another that operates as a business that saves parents money on college tuition by offering ways to earn college credit in high school. In this essay, therefore, I argue that for the AP English program to fully prepare students for the rigors of college reading and writing, AP teachers need to focus less on preparing students for standardized testing and more time providing their students opportunities for more practice in critical reading and writing. With the current level of focus on AP test preparation, the AP program, my research suggests, tends to stunt its effectiveness in preparing students for college. To make this argument, I will draw from findings from my survey with John Carroll students that examined their transition from high school AP English to 200-level college courses, without taking a first-year composition course. This paper also examines local high school English curricula and offers a critique of their choices in course offerings. Doing so, therefore, addresses some concerns voiced in the dated literature. This argument is crucial, it seems to me, because the college admissions process continues to be competitive, and high schools need updated information on how well the AP program is working and how to best continue to offer it to their students.

Advanced Placement English: The Basics

In order to understand the goals and purposes of the AP English program, I have provided an overview of the curricula and its standardized tests. This review is important if we are to analyze its effectiveness and capability of substituting first-year composition, especially with the growing competition of high schools offering ways for their students to experience the rigors of college reading and writing before matriculating to college. Advanced Placement (AP) is an educational program owned and marketed by The College Board, promoted as a chance for high school students to do “college-level” work and earn credit or advanced standing at colleges and universities while still in high school. Each May, The College Board offers over 30 different AP exams, including AP English Language and Composition and AP English Literature and Composition, which are administered through the Educational Testing Service. The test starts with one hour to answer approximately 45 multiple choice questions, based on 4-5 reading passages, asking students to analyze the rhetorical effectiveness of the given passages. Students devote the second and third hours of the test to writing three different types of essays. With the AP Language test, which is the course more aligned with current FYC goals, the three essays are a rhetorical analysis piece on a given text, an argumentative essay based off a given prompt, and what is referred to as the “synthesis” essay where the students receive 6-8 sources (opinion pieces, graphs, political cartoons, etc.) on an argumentative topic, and the students must evaluate and synthesize at least three of these sources into an argumentative composition. While these tests have been adapted many times over the past several decades to accommodate the evolving

needs of FYC, many still see inadequacies in how they determine if a student is ready for college-level reading and writing.

Often, experts criticize how standardized tests are scored, but The College Board has developed a compromise of speedy objectivity and subjective essay scoring that still helps students to write for a particular audience and not a computer. The multiple-choice portion is machine scored for objectivity and ease. Essay rating occurs one month after the tests are taken and is done by a recruited team of high school and college writing instructors in a single location. This reading of essays takes an entire week, with readers working nine hours a day, rating each essay on a 6-point analytical rubric¹. The 6-point scale, new for the 2021 test, has been devised by a chief reader who oversees the entire scoring process, and it is taught to the readers using a range of benchmarked scored essays. Three hundred fifty to four hundred readers per question usually sit at tables of nine (four high school teachers, four college professors, and one table leader) to read and score, occasionally taking breaks to recalibrate scoring to the scale. Typically, readers read and process over two million essays that week. Once each essay has been scored, the Educational Testing Service uses a formula weighting essay performance with the multiple choice score to give a final score on a 1-5 scale: 1 is “no recommendation,” 2 is “possibly qualified,” 3 is “qualified,” 4 is “well qualified,” and 5 is “extremely well qualified.” This score is what is sent to students, their high schools, and their selected colleges and universities the

¹ See <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-english-language-and-composition-frqs-1-2-3-scoring-rubrics.pdf>

following month (Jolliffe 60). Then it is up to each college or university to determine what minimum score they choose to accept, if any at all, for college credit and/or placement into an advanced course at their institution. This test grading strategy has been developed and adjusted over the last several decades to ensure fairness and accuracy, since the students' scores indicate their ability to gain college credit or not.

And what happens in the classroom leading up to the exam? According to The College Board's description of the course, the "AP English Language and Composition course aligns to an introductory college-level rhetoric and writing curriculum." The curriculum specifically calls for students to compose in several forms about a variety of subjects, writing through several stages or drafts with revision aided by teachers and peers. Students reflect on their own writing and the techniques used by other writers, read nonfiction pieces to identify and explain an author's use of rhetorical strategies and techniques, and analyze visual images both in relation to written texts and as alternative forms of text themselves. They conduct research and write papers in which they present an argument of their own that includes the analysis and synthesis of ideas from an array of carefully chosen sources that are correctly cited. They revise their work to develop a wide-ranging vocabulary, varying sentence structures, logical organization, and an effective use of rhetoric (APCentral.CollegeBoard.com). All of these activities and learning objectives in AP Language effectively compare with what students learn in a FYC course, making it on paper a suitable alternative to the traditional FYC course.

Where some confusion begins in evaluating the program's efficacy for use as a FYC substitute is with the AP Literature course and exam. This course, which was the first of the two

AP English courses designed and at the time was aligned with FYC goals of the 1950s, is still a valuable course, but is more focused on reading and analyzing canonical literature. This contrasts with the current objectives of FYC being rhetoric and composition. According to Kristine Hansen in her book chapter “The Composition Marketplace: Shopping for Credit Versus Learning to Write,” it is not advised that this course should be substituted for FYC at all, though some institutions, including John Carroll, continue to allow it with their incoming students (20). While this project includes exploration of both courses, AP Language is the one that is more aligned with the current goals of FYC.

To ensure that the AP English program stays relevant to FYC, a partnership exists between the test writers and the WPA which has already had an effect with a reconfiguration of the test and therefore the AP curriculum to include more of a focus on rhetorical analysis. According to Joliffe, representatives from the test development committees have joined the WPA for their summer workshops since the early 1990s to discuss course relevancy (73). The most recent changes to the AP Language course and test are outlined in a document put out by The College Board in the Fall of 2019². Beginning in May 2019, a course and exam description (CED) was released that “clearly outlines all required course content and defines how that content will be assessed on the exam.” The CED outlines nine different units that focus on rhetorical analysis, argumentation, and synthesis and mirror a curriculum similar to some of the

² <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-english-language-updates-2019-20.pdf?course=ap-english-language-and-composition>

college textbooks that veteran AP Language teachers use to teach the course's content. This resource provides teachers with clear objectives of what should be covered to plan for the exam.

The biggest changes to the AP Language test in 2020 were the use of analytic essay rubrics instead of holistic ones, fewer multiple-choice questions (with some of these questions now addressing composition), and shorter reading passages for the multiple-choice questions. These changes help make the test more focused on composition and to give students more critical questions with fewer passages to read, testing their analysis abilities and not their stamina. Additionally, as of 2007 all AP courses are now audited by the College Board, requiring each AP teacher to write and submit their curriculum for accreditation and approval, which helps to hold teachers and institutions accountable to the program's standards (see Appendix A for the syllabus I submitted in 2007 as an example). Between the CWPA (Council of Writing Program Administrators)/AP partnership and the rubric submission for teacher accountability, The College Board has done much to keep AP English an evolving and relevant program.

After understanding AP's logistics, it is important to consider what makes AP an attractive option for high school students. Besides providing a more challenging curriculum for higher-achieving students, the answer lies with what has become a business in college preparation and the promise it gives of getting students ahead. In a time where more and more fields expect a college education, and that college education is getting more and more competitive and expensive, students and their families are looking for ways to get an edge on their futures. Public school districts and private secondary schools alike are being forced into not only boasting how well they prepare students for college, but also making promises that some of

those expensive credits can be earned concurrently with their high school ones. One of these courses that is most at risk for being outsourced by high schools is first-year composition (FYC).

To address this growing trend, the Council of Writing Program Administrators' (CWPA), whose existence is to advocate "for best practices in the teaching of writing in post-secondary institutions," created a position statement for stakeholders on this issue to consider (Hansen et al. 181). According to the "CWPA Position Statement on Pre-College Credit for Writing," "choosing the optimum course in writing instruction for a given student should not be a matter of determining how to earn a few required credits in the cheapest and quickest way possible, but a matter of how to gain the most value at the right time and place in the student's education" (Hansen et al. 187). This statement also recognizes that between inconsistencies in AP programs, student abilities and circumstances, and different college requirements, there are too many variables for the CWPA to make a clear-cut statement advising between using AP and other concurrent enrollment option. Post-secondary institutions, however, should be careful in their choices for providing credit (182). Correspondingly, John Carroll University has made the choice to only accept a score of 4 or higher on AP English tests to account for these discrepancies. After doing a thorough study into several dual enrollment options, including AP, the CWPA's position is that there is plenty of value in the AP English courses due to its rich curriculum focusing on rhetorical analysis and professional development opportunities for its teachers. However, CWPA does question whether AP tests should be considered valid indicators of student proficiency of FYC skills and does not recommend taking AP courses for the sole purpose of exchanging these scores for FYC credit (190). This stance, however, still does not consider the recent changes

made to the program and the continued professional development and training AP instructors invest in to create AP courses with higher levels of expectations.

The AP program is actively trying to stay relevant and continue to offer a curriculum that is based on the changing needs of what high school students need to be ready for college. It is important to remember that with these most current changes, much of the research reviewed below is from five to ten years ago and predates these changes. This gap in research of the effectiveness of the AP program is one of the many reasons why this current project is important in giving a more recent picture of AP's effectiveness, particularly the AP Language course.

Literature Review

Much of the research on how the AP program prepares students for college reading and writing is dated. However, this research is still important to my study since some of this scholarship takes a hard look at the AP English program within the context of earning college credit, while others examine the pedagogical activity that takes place in most FYC classrooms, which can be applied to what needs to occur in an AP English classroom. In short, this scholarship points out that the AP English program falls short of providing what students need for college reading and writing preparation. Yet, gaps in the research still exist, specifically in scholars evaluating the recent changes AP has made to consciously align itself more with FYC.

It is important to note that there is almost a 10-year gap between these reviews and what is being done in the program today. In 2010, Patrick Sullivan, Howard Tinberg, and Sheridan

Blau edited a volume of assignments, readings, and student writing samples called *What is “College-Level” Writing?* An entire section of the book is devoted to crossing the divide between high school and college, which includes a few essays that compare AP English to FYC. David Joliffe’s essay and another by Ronald Lunsford, John Kiser, and Deborah Coxwell-Teague give critical perspective into the AP program in comparing it to a typical FYC course. A separate article by Kirk S. Kidwell gives an essential overview of the first-year college student’s transformation in taking initiative for their education and learning, which can contribute to the evaluation of AP’s ability to emulate FYC. Both these evaluations of the AP Language program and the insight on first-year college student maturation and responsibility can be applied to the current AP courses to judge their efficacy for substituting college writing courses, though the approvals of the AP program below come with stipulations. Therefore, some of the voiced concerns may no longer be applicable with the changes that have been made more recently. This project is intended to help bridge the gap between those concerns and what AP English has become today.

One of the sections in Sullivan and others’ volume evaluates the options available to high school students to better prepare for college reading and writing, including the AP English program. In his essay from this section, “Advanced Placement English and College Composition: Can’t We All Just Get Along?” David Joliffe, an advocate of the AP program who once served as a member of the test development committee and as chief reader for the AP Language test, asserts that while the AP Language “*course* might be superior to a typical first-year college course in terms of its preparation of students to succeed as readers and writers,” it should not

suffice as a student's sole preparation for college reading and writing (58). Specifically, he points out that "neither an AP English course...nor the writing done in the course and on the examination is college writing. The course is a high school course, taught by high school teachers. The students who take it are in high school; therefore, their writing cannot be college-level writing" (57-58). In pointing out that the writing performed in these courses is high school writing, not college-level, Joliffe uses the rest of his chapter to outline the program and go through its strengths and weaknesses. While he acknowledges the downside of the course leading to a standardized test used to determine the students' eligibility for college credit, Joliffe debates the teachers and the course itself as being very rich and full of possibility. Between AP teachers having a degree in education, unlike many FYC courses being taught by graduate students, and the collaboration and professional development offered to AP teachers, the instructors have the potential to be highly effective. Joliffe even contends that serving as an AP test reader and deliberating reading and writing skills with both FYC and AP teachers for a week is the most "valuable professional development experience for teachers who are concerned about high school to college articulation" (62). Taking these aspects into consideration, Joliffe believes if the course is taught the way it is designed, students should receive college credit, but only for a 4 or 5 on the test. This credit should *not* replace all the student's college writing courses, however, giving a nudge to FYC programs to be at least two semesters (64-65). He also believes partnerships should be forged between AP and FYC instructors to keep the course and test relevant (73), which has occurred, hence the recent changes to the courses and tests. Overall, these changes are for the better, keeping the program evolving to the needs of today's students, and while, as Joliffe maintains that AP work cannot be considered college writing, simply

because it does not occur in a college setting, these partnerships between AP and FYC will enable the program to get as close as it can possibly get.

Another essay from Sullivan and others' volume that offers some points of contention comes from Ronald Lunsford, John Kiser, and Deborah Coxwell-Teague and their essay, "Advanced Placement English and College Composition: A Comparison of Writing at the High School and First-Year College Levels." Lunsford, Kiser and Coxwell-Teague directly respond to Joliffe's assessment that students who score well on the AP Language exam should receive college credit and agree that this credit for FYC should be partial and not full, also recommending that FYC should be more than one semester. Their work as a group, however, primarily dives into essay evaluation between AP and FYC. Lunsford and Coxwell-Teague both work at the college-level, while Kiser worked on the high school level and at the time of this essay served as a consultant for the AP program, all providing strong perspectives in evaluating the differences between AP and FYC. Together, the three look at several student essays, both AP and FYC, and debate their differences before coming to their shared recommendation on if AP Language can serve as a suitable substitute for FYC. The most common difference they see is that the AP essays often are more literary in their analysis and lack an understanding of rhetorical function and audience awareness. This distinction may best be captured with the differences in the essay prompts. One of the high school essays the team looks at is an AP Literature prompt, a class that is still rooted in literary analysis and does not cover rhetorical features, such as writing for a variety of audiences. As distinguished in the previous section of this paper, many agree that the AP Literature test should *not* be considered for FYC credit simply because it does not cover

these objectives. Another essay, this time an FYC one, does show an understanding of writing for a particular audience, but perhaps the writer has because it explicitly asks for the student to do so in the prompt: “There’s no one way to approach or structure this essay or any of the other essays you will write in this class. What you say in this paper and how you say it will depend on the ideas you want to communicate to your readers—the other students in this class and me” (Lunsford et al. 88). Of course, a student in a class that does not consider the idea of audience is going to put out papers that are difficult to connect with! To say it is not possible for a high school student to write with a true connection to his or her audience, or evaluate intended audience in their reading, is short-sided and unfair, because *good* AP Language teachers do cover identification of audience (see Appendix B for an example of such an AP assignment). Other misconceptions about the AP surface, such as Lunsford claiming he asks his students to do more different kinds of writing in FYC than just the argumentative type that AP covers, but Kiser quickly clarifies that AP Language students also write reflective and informative pieces as well, despite the lack of evidence in their chosen samples (92-93). The examination of differences between FYC and AP culminated in this recommendation: while these three instructors believe the AP program to be valid and that students who score well should receive college credit, there are some caveats. First, AP Literature students should receive credit for a general education requirement, not FYC, due to the foci of the courses being too different (94). Second, in agreement with Joliffe, AP Language students should receive partial FYC credit, not full, because they still felt there were deficits in FYC goals, such as writing as a true process, research and sourcing, and writing with a clear sense of audience (95). While this book chapter models a constructive partnership between AP and FYC instructors, the recommendation made did not

take all the rich aspects of AP Language into account, nor does it take into account the more recent changes to the program.

Another line of scholarship on the first-year college experience that is independent of the AP program comes from Kirk S. Kidwell's article "Understanding the College First-Year Experience." Here, Kidwell explains the importance of comprehending how first-year college students evolve as learners. Using the background Kidwell provides, my project will determine whether this evolution can take place within the framework of an AP classroom. Drawing on his experience as a writing teacher, Kidwell describes this purgatory first-year students find themselves in and the developmental steps they go through to work themselves out of it and continue to be successful in college. Kidwell believes these high school courses mold students well in such skills as time management, note taking, and essay writing, and that students learn to adapt these skills to their college workload. The challenge for students, Kidwell suggests, is for them to use these tools and become reflective learners—specifically, learning how to learn and how to view their instructors as facilitators and less as authority figures (254). Kidwell goes on to outline the transformation of learning styles students go through: viewing learning as black and white that they receive from their professors (dualists); seeing knowledge as theories, with professors holding more privileged theorems (multiplists); and finally the realization that college is an environment where the student works equally with his or her professors to test theories and acquire knowledge through an active role (relativism). Kidwell finishes his article by recommending that high school teachers and college professors can help students through this process simply by becoming more aware of it. Instructors can help students "by not offering the

easy way out by a return to the naïve comfort of dualist thinking” (255). While Kidwell does not directly address if this learning transformation is possible while still in high school, I would suggest that judging by the rigorous AP curriculum, it is possible to at least get students out of the dualist way of thinking. Especially in a classroom that focuses much on critical reading and writing, which leads to meaning making, an AP English classroom is just the right environment for students to begin making this shift, helping them to be better equipped to take responsibility for their own learning by the time they reach a college campus.

While much of this research recognizes the strengths of particularly the AP Language course, specialists in the field only recommend using the course for FYC credit with reservation. Both Joliffe and Lunsford and others recognize the strengths of the AP Language program but are not satisfied with it being a student’s only academic work in college-level writing, due to the gaps in writing development and inconsistencies of AP programs across the board. Instead, they suggest college credit be given, but that FYC programs be extended past one semester. Kirk Kidwell would most likely agree with their assessment, believing that the gaining of educational responsibility a first- year college student undergoes is not quite the same when a high school student is in a challenging course at high school standards. These assessments, however, have not considered the most recent changes to the AP Language program. To give some insight into the current workings and its efficacy, the following sections of this paper discuss the research I conducted with recent AP students and local high schools that believe in the strengths of the program, showing that with a few changes, AP Language can serve as a strong option for earning FYC credit and preparing students for college expectations.

Methodology

I originally hypothesized that while AP English can be a curriculum with rich opportunities for the student, it should be valued as a steppingstone to college preparation and not a substitution for it. After seeing the ten-year gap in research on AP English effectiveness, however, I decided to go directly to the source, the students themselves, to learn more about how well AP courses prepare first-year John Carroll students for college-level reading and writing more recently. I conducted a survey of John Carroll students from the past five years to gather both quantitative and qualitative data regarding their experiences in their transition from high school AP classes directly into 200-level courses. Based on initial review by the Institutional Review Board at John Carroll University, formal IRB approval was not required for this study, as its focus is was on the student experience, rather than the students, themselves. I also asked several of the top ten high schools from Northeastern Ohio that feed the most students into John Carroll about their English curriculums to get an idea for what types of courses, and in what sequence, these high schools offer. I felt that contacting these schools would create a more extensive picture of how students prepare for college reading and writing at John Carroll, which I could compare with the responses the students give in their surveys. This section of my research provides a framing of the small-scale study I conducted and an overview of the expected results of the study.

For my project, I conducted a small-scale study to gather information from students to learn about the impacts of their AP English coursework in preparing them for college. A small-

scale study is pragmatic as it limits a research question to a manageable scope and timeline. The limited scope and timeline allow for completion of my research project as well as the possibility for continued investigation in a further study. This type of study benefitted my research in two ways. First, the size of the study limits the scope of my research and demands a specific focus on John Carroll University and its students. Second, this small size of the study allows me to approach a recurring issue and question (how well do AP courses substitute for FYC/EN 125) with a specific, manageable perspective.

In order to gather information, I designed and distributed a survey to participants identified by John Carroll's registrar's office— only students from Fall 2015 through Fall 2019 that used AP test scores as credit for EN 125. 178 students were contacted via email addresses obtained through the registrar's office to participate in the study. I sent these participants an email with a link to a Qualtrics survey (Appendix C) that asked questions about the student's experience with their high school's AP English program and readiness for college level reading and writing. The survey was administered via Qualtrics along with an explanation of the purpose of this research (Appendix D). A total 48 of students elected to participate. I am specifically looking at how well students felt prepared for college reading and writing, what specific types of activities helped them in their transition, and what gaps they experienced in adjustment between AP English and college.

Additionally, I procured a list of the top ten local high schools whose graduates choose to attend John Carroll, again from the registrar's office. I studied each school's English curriculum via their respective school's website, particularly their AP course offerings, and created a short

list of schools to contact. The schools on this short list either had incomplete AP English offerings (i.e. one of the two possible courses were not offered or the school had recently done away with the program completely), offered additional AP courses that I wished to explore regarding college reading and writing preparation, or offered both AP and CCP courses as possibilities to earn college credit while still on their high school campus. These email communications combined with the student survey data create a more complete picture of how effective AP English is in preparing students for college reading and writing.

Results

As mentioned in my methods above, both the student survey and contact with current teachers and guidance counselors at local feeder high schools to John Carroll give me the information to properly evaluate the current efficacy of AP English for college reading and writing readiness. I contend that the results of my survey support my hypothesis: the AP English program is a rich curriculum that covers college-level reading and writing skills that has the potential to replace a FYC course, such as John Carroll's EN 125. However, with a few modifications to the program, including less focus on test preparation, AP English can be even more effective in preparing students for college reading and writing. Beginning with the survey results, I will first disclose my quantitative findings, establishing background information for the students I surveyed, followed by their perceived impact on their college success from AP English Language and Literature respectively. Then I will discuss my qualitative findings on how the AP program helped students mature for college-level reading and writing, along with their thoughts

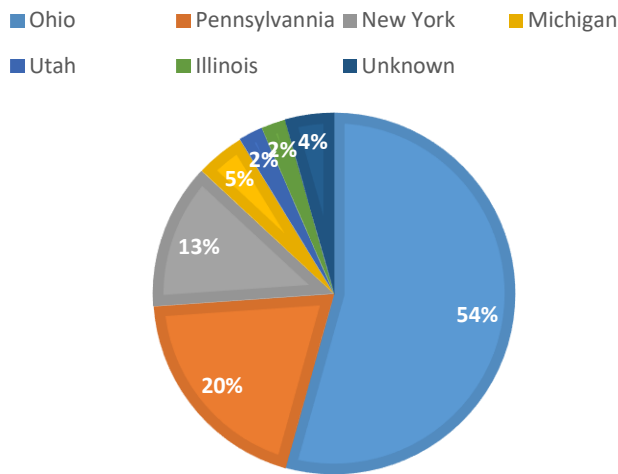
on how test preparation helped or hindered their goals. Finally, I will share my findings from the area high schools I contacted. These findings include a new AP program, how these schools balance AP with dual enrollment offerings, and how some have reconfigured the order of their offered curriculum to more easily accommodate AP courses.

Participant Background

Some general background information on those who participated in the survey is necessary, because it helps those involved in college transition from AP English to FYC understand the local and personal backgrounds of the participants. Out of the former first-year students from Fall 2015 through Fall 2019 that participated in the survey, the greatest percentage of respondents, 27%, graduated from high school and began their studies at John Carroll in 2019, meaning that their recollection of their AP English experiences would be the most recent. Additionally, 12.5% of respondents graduated in 2018, almost 19% each from 2017 and 2016, and 23% were from 2015. Of these participants, 88% came from local cities or states to attend John Carroll, located in Northeastern Ohio, either coming from in-state or within two states away. The breakdown of their state of origin can be seen below in Figure 1. Over 85% of the students surveyed came to John Carroll with an intended major, showing that as serious AP students, they had given considerable thought to their future career paths. Interestingly, only 10% of these students graduated or will graduate with a degree in English, which shows an understanding of the importance of reading and writing across disciplines. This low percentage

of English majors could also show the effects of outsourcing FYC. The largest percentage was 20%, which were students pursuing business degrees, which is not surprising for John Carroll, a Jesuit school with an excellent business program. Other degrees pursued include biology,

PARTICIPANT STATE OF ORIGIN
FIGURE 1



psychology, political science, and communications (see Appendix E for a complete overview). Student responses continued to reflect the marketed need to acquire college credit while still in high school. When asked for their intention for taking part in the AP English program, 60% answered their top reason was “to

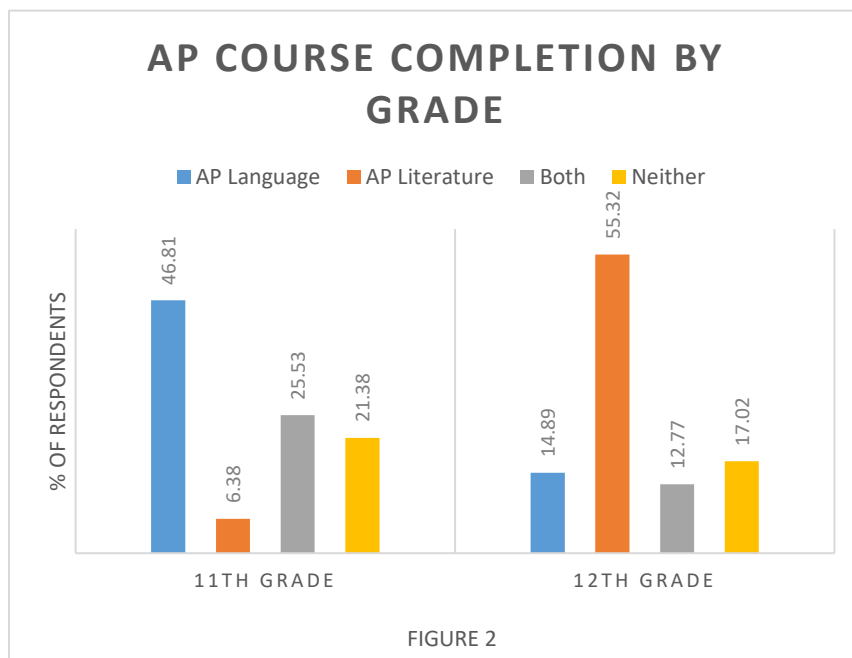
earn college credit,” while 34% answered what educators might hope they would answer: “to challenge myself academically.” This data reflects the current environment high school students find themselves in: get ahead and acquire an edge on their college acceptance, which is no doubt echoed by their teachers, counselors, and parents. It also supports what Hansen argues about composition being viewed as a market commodity. She suggests that the current popular attitude regards education as a matter of accumulating credit hours, especially with FYC where writing is misunderstood as a low-level skill that can be mastered fairly quickly (2). Overall, this background information creates a comprehensive picture of the population I surveyed. Besides having the ability to score a 4 or 5 on their AP English exam in the last five years, these students come from generally the same area of the country, were focused and goal-oriented in a variety of

disciplines, and realistically aware of what it would take to achieve these goals, both academically and financially.

In addition to this background information, I also asked the students for specifics on what each respondent's high school AP experience looked like. This information gives a clearer picture of how each student planned for each test, at what age they took each test, and their satisfaction with their experience. This data is organized by each AP course and test they took, because it helps to differentiate the feedback students gave resulting from each test that was taken.

Impact of AP English Language Program on Students

The first set of survey results to be explored relate specifically to the AP Language and Composition program. According to Kathleen Puhr in her book chapter "The Evolution of AP English Language and Composition," this course "is becoming a rhetorical course, designed to provide high school students with a curriculum closely aligned with a college composition course" (68). Since it is more closely affiliated with FYC, it is this course that most researchers believe could suffice as a replacement for FYC, if any at all. Nearly 47% of respondents took this course and exam their junior year. A quarter of all respondents said they took both AP exams that year, culminating in 72% of respondents taking AP Language their junior year. With this course most closely resembling FYC, it is interesting to note that this many students took the test meant to prepare them for college reading and writing their junior year, as opposed to the 28%



their senior year (see Figure 2). These percentages echo the trend of offering AP Language in 11th grade and AP Literature in 12th grade, which makes it easier to accommodate the popular high school curriculum of studying American

Literature in 11th grade and British Literature in 12th grade. Some high schools, as will be discussed later, implement other strategies in getting around this traditional flow of offering what is advertised to be a FYC class equivalent two years before a student enters college. The lower percentage of this test taken in the senior year also echoes the present push for high school students to concurrently achieve as many high school and college credits as they can as early as they can. Regardless of when they took the AP Language exam, 95% of students prepared through a corresponding class offered at their high school. The key issue of concern in this project is if students that scored well enough on their AP exams to earn credit for John Carroll's EN 125 did well once matriculating to college. Seeing as these students scored 4s and 5s, combined with their qualitative responses shared below, they were fortunate enough to have an AP Language experience that Joliffe would describe as best-case scenario with a rich rhetoric-based curriculum (58).

Regarding student satisfaction with their AP Language experience, the data reflects that this program does what it claims to do: prepare students for college. 90% of students felt AP Language prepared them for college writing with 61% going so far as to say they felt “extremely well prepared.” Regarding college reading, 83% felt prepared after their AP Language course, with 53% choosing “extremely well” as an option. These high percentages of readiness for college skills, especially when applied to other disciplines as seen through their majors (business, sciences, etc.), shows that these students value their time spent in their AP Language course. The participants’ readiness for college is more distinctly expressed through their qualitative responses, which are disclosed in a later section.

Impact of AP English Literature Program on Students

While AP Literature was the original AP English course created by the College Board, most instructors find it is less aligned with FYC than AP Language. According to Joliffe, as much as there is value in “student’s abilities to engage in close readings of fiction, poetry, and drama and to write themes about literature...[it] is a small subset of the range of academic and public writing” (64). In other words, this exam tends to cover and serve students who will choose to go on to become English majors and doesn’t necessarily cover applicable skills in other disciplines. Regardless, 68% of respondents took the AP Literature program their senior year, while only 32% took it in their junior year (see above, Figure 2). This data goes along with the traditional trajectory of taking this AP program in 12th grade and AP Language in 11th grade.

Again, regardless of which year they took the exam, 95% of respondents prepared for it through a corresponding high school class.

Despite the AP Literature course being more literature-based and less aligned with current FYC standards, overall, students who took this course felt ready for college expectations and received credit for John Carroll's EN 125 because of their high scores. 82% of students felt AP Literature prepared them for college writing with 50% going so far as to say they felt "extremely well prepared." Regarding college reading, 82% felt prepared after AP Literature with 30% choosing "extremely well" as an option. While these percentages of readiness for college skills are still considered to be high, they are still slightly lower than the positive feedback given for AP Language, even though the majority of students took this course only one year before college as opposed to two years before as with AP Language. Again, the participants' qualitative responses more distinctly express their experiences, which are shared in the next section.

To best understand the qualitative data presented, I chose to categorize the trends from the survey. The survey requires qualitative responses to allow the respondents to answer as clearly as possible. When I reviewed the survey results, I saw trends emerging, which I amassed into three categories of interest: college reading preparation, college writing preparation, and the amount of test preparation given. As above, most students highly rated how well they felt ready for college reading and writing because of their AP courses. Below are the additional qualitative responses and explanations students provided.

Effects on College Reading Preparation

In regard to college reading preparation, 50% of students chose the obvious answer that reading college-level texts helped them the most. 31%, however, cited class discussions as what helped them the most for college-level reading. Overall, respondents stressed that experience and practice with higher-level texts, including duplicate readings of these texts, helped them to break down and understand difficult passages. One respondent specified that “challenging yourself by reading more advanced writing is the only way to become a better reader.” Participants who cited class discussions as a key factor in helping them to decipher difficult texts mentioned the use of Socratic seminars, Harkness discussions, and modeling argument formulation in groups as more specific ways these dialogues helped them to decipher college texts. Some respondents even commented that the discussion level in these AP classes were on par with the level of sophistication in their John Carroll classes. Finally, some students cited that their instructors were the best they ever had, because they continuously modeled how to read these more difficult texts. Therefore, practice, discussion, and teacher assistance were factors that seemed to help these students the most when tackling more difficult texts and preparing them for college-level reading.

Effects on College Writing Preparation

When asked to elaborate on what helped them the most with preparing for college-level writing, 44% of students cited a particular writing assignment, most often referred to as a junior

year research project. One third of students felt it was teacher guidance that helped them develop the most, often specified in terms of high standards, substantial and frequent feedback, and availability to review their writing. The use of peer reviews and workshops also helped students to see their argument from other perspectives and create a stronger one in their writing. Therefore, according to the participants, higher level writing assignments, such as research papers; teacher guidance; and peer reviews contributed the most to student success and college writing preparation in the AP classroom.

Student Opinion on Amount of Test Preparation

When asked to identify what, if anything, would have helped them be more prepared for college-level expectations, 30% of participants cited less test preparation for the AP exam. Some of these participants went on to say that the shift partway through the year to test practice, specifically for the multiple-choice questions, was disruptive. Many of the qualitative replies echoed the 38% of participants who said that this time spent on test preparation would be better used for critical reading (19%) and writing (19%) work. In reading, time was specifically requested for more difficult texts, including more close reading and the reading of academic essays, which one student responded that reading academic articles “was something that took [him or her] some time to be able to successfully do” and “more exposure” would have been helpful. Still, while many did consider themselves ready for college-level writing, some students responded that the extra time spent on writing practice would bridge the “gap between high school writing about literature and actual critical writing.” One student even went so far as to say

she did not feel well prepared because he or she “ended up developing a style [of writing] that was too verbose for manuscripts.” Overall, respondents felt there was too much time spent preparing for the test itself and that that time would be better spent honing their reading and writing skills.

Considering all of these students had received either a 4 or 5 on their AP exam(s), 100% of participants said if given the choice they would go the AP route again, with 69% citing college preparation and 30% citing finances as their top reasons for doing so. When given the chance to elaborate on this answer, students cited reasons of readiness and the fact they could save both time and money by taking these courses in high school. One student even went so far as to say he or she “probably wouldn’t have graduated [from John Carroll] in four years without the AP credit.” Others used the opportunity to express how thoroughly prepared they felt for college expectations or how it enriched their education. For example, one student said, “I worked very diligently to succeed in my AP class. I wanted to do well because I always want to challenge myself as a writer. Knowing that I had challenged myself enough to earn college credit was so rewarding and filled me with confidence for college.” Another student commented that taking both courses helped to analyze and comprehend their work efficiently, and even though he or she majored in sciences, the work done in his or her AP courses helped him or her to excel in their core requirements, as well as in his or her major. Finally, one student even said he or she was complimented on their writing abilities by their first professors at John Carroll, owing that compliment to his or her time spent in AP. Overall, these responses show the pride and

confidence that the AP program instilled in these students, another benefit that is just as valuable as the reading and writing skills they hone.

In general, the survey data shows that the changes made to the AP program, especially in AP Language and Composition, have helped to prepare students for college reading and writing. With a rich curriculum, exceptional teachers, challenging assignments, and stimulating class discussions, most students graduated feeling confident and ready to take on college-level work. Most agreed, however, that test preparation leaves less time for valuable reading and writing practice, which is something to be reviewed later as a recommendation.

Responses from Teachers and Counselors Regarding High School Curriculum

In addition to surveying students from John Carroll about their AP experience, I also contacted local teachers and counselors from local high schools about their English curricula. The high schools I chose to contact had non-traditional offerings of AP courses--- anything besides offering AP Language in 11th grade and AP Literature in the 12th grade. This narrowed down my correspondence with four area high schools: Solon High School, St. Ignatius High School, Magnificat High School, and Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School. The insight I received back from these schools became valuable because it helped me understand each school's reasoning behind what courses they offer and to evaluate several different solutions for area schools trying their best to prepare their students for college.

One of the programs that two of these high-performing high schools offer is AP Capstone, a more recent program started by The College Board. It consists of two different courses, AP Research and AP Seminar, which can be offered as early as the 10th grade. According to AP's website, "Rather than teaching subject-specific content, these courses develop students' skills in research, analysis, evidence-based arguments, collaboration, writing, and presenting. Students who complete the two-year program can earn one of two different AP Capstone awards, which are valued by colleges across the United States and around the world."³ Vicki Maslo, AP Seminar teacher and head of Solon High School's English department, described the program in the following way:

AP Seminar is a course that focuses on creation of evidence-based arguments and presentations. [Students] are to establish context, defend a thesis in a logical, cohesive line of reasoning, and evaluate/analyze credible research throughout. For each paper, students will deliver a presentation of that argument. The two papers are submitted to AP to be scored by a grader. The presentations are recorded and scored by high school teachers who may be audited at any time and asked to send the videos to the College Board/AP. The students also complete two hours of writing during their End of Course exam. They evaluate the arguments, claims, and evidence of selected texts, as well as writing an evidence-based argument based on provided texts. AP Research [taken the

³ <http://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-capstone>

following year] requires that they embark on a year-long inquiry. They conduct research and write and present their findings in one extensive paper.

In addition to Maslo's description above, the program's website lists several benefits, including students having the potential to "become self-confident, independent thinkers and problem solvers" and offering "flexible student-centered curricula with room for creativity and student input." These benefits would give high school students the opportunity to take charge of their learning and mature past the dualist way of thinking Kidwell speaks of in that first year of college, which would enable them to enter college already understanding their own stake in their educational responsibility. The course also speaks to several of the gaps in writing development that Lunsford and others cite, such as experience with writing as a true process, conducting research and evaluating sources, and writing with a clear sense of audience (95). Upon investigation with the registrar's office, John Carroll does offer credit for these new AP courses, usually in place of a general education requirement that most closely relates to the subject matter the student worked on within their coursework. With the continued college-level of reading and writing expectations these additional courses offer, combined with AP Language, this addendum to the AP program seems like an excellent way to address some of the gaps between an inadequate AP Language course and FYC.

While a newer option of earning college credit in high school in Ohio known as College Credit Plus (CCP or dual enrollment) has been quite popular with many school districts, it is worthy to note that neither high school, St. Ignatius nor Solon, that offers AP Capstone to their students offer CCP or dual enrollment English courses to their students. CCP allows high school

students to take college courses either on a local college campus or on their own high school campus, and that credit is counted for both their high school and college requirements simultaneously. Ann Trocchio, guidance counselor at Solon City Schools, explains that with their AP English department having such an excellent reputation with admissions offices all over the country, they advise most of their students to stick with their AP English department rather than taking a chance with CCP, where the rigor of the class and the availability to transfer credit is unknown. The only other mention of this possible problem with credit transfer that I found was in the Magnificat High School course curriculum guide⁴. Magnificat, an all-girls high school in Rocky River, Ohio, was the only school that offered a pros and cons list of both AP and CCP options, but because of the possible credit transfer issue with CCP, the school seems to favor the AP program, which is recognized by more college and university admissions offices nationally. However, Magnificat only offers AP Literature to their students, sometimes counseling students to take both exams, claiming their curriculum covers the language and rhetoric aspects around teaching the literature (McMillin). With newer options besides AP to offer students for preparing for college and earning college credit, many schools are still in the early stages of navigating which options will best serve their student populations.

Another high school I reached out to was Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School (NDCL) in Chardon, Ohio. I reached out to NDCL because they no longer offer any AP courses in English,

⁴<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1596561095/magnificathsorg/klrqmviiaz0pc047voli/2020-21CurriculumGuide1.pdf>

only CCP courses. After much analysis, NDCL dropped AP Language from their curriculum in 2016, followed by AP Literature in 2017, because, as the assistant principal Denise Teeple shared, most teachers found themselves “teaching to the test” and preferred the option of teaching advanced English courses through CCP on their campus where “research, creativity, collaboration, and communication” would be easier to incorporate into their curriculum. At least with this decision, the school has more control over the rigor of the CCP course, since it is taught by their own teachers that have done the coursework that Joliffe says most high school teachers have not experienced. And, it eliminates the negative aspects of preparing for a high-stakes standardized test.

Finally, some high schools tackle the problem of offering the equivalent of FYC to juniors instead of seniors simply by switching the order of their AP English offerings. Several years ago, after offering AP Language in 11th grade and AP Literature in the 12th as the traditional sequence, St. Ignatius High School switched the ordering to more easily accommodate British Literature with the AP Literature curriculum (Beach). This switch gave the added benefit of offering AP Language in the 12th grade, closer to their students’ matriculation to college. This simple switch is an easy adjustment for high schools to make if they choose to use the AP program to prepare their students for college reading and writing.

Through these email interactions with local high schools, each school showed their personalized way of looking at their student and teacher populations to create what they consider the best path of course offerings for their students to get ready for college. With all the options

available for preparing for college and acquiring college credit while still in high school, this current time seems to be one of transition.

Recommendations

Despite the fact the research is a decade old, Joliffe and Lunsford and others support giving college credit to students who thrive in the AP English Language program. While each acknowledged AP Language was a closer substitute for FYC than AP Literature, they gave their approvals for AP Language to be used as credit for FYC with caveats. These sources cited the need for AP Language to be as rich as the program is designed to be with research-based arguments crafted with various audiences in mind. These sources also suggested if college credit is given for AP test scores, it should not cover all of the student's FYC experience, suggesting that FYC should be longer than one semester. The idea of enhancing an already rich AP program was echoed by the results I found in surveying John Carroll students, who used their AP scores as credit for EN 125. Perhaps what was suggested by the students in the survey is the common denominator: less test preparation. In this section, I will outline the drawback of excessive test preparation, while also giving suggestions for how that time can be better utilized in the AP classroom and beyond. Then I will examine reordering the high school course sequence to better accommodate AP courses and give suggestions for future research on the topic of using the AP program to better prepare students for college.

Trading Test Preparation Time for More Critical Practice

Regarding test preparation, students and teachers should keep in mind why the test exists: to assess what the students can do. If the students' skills are well-developed through the rich AP curriculum to critically read and write, why should much time be spent on test skills? Perhaps a practice test or two to ease anxiety and familiarize students with the test format is acceptable, but the course curriculum should not be dictated or limited by teaching test strategies. Not only does giving credence to test preparation take time away from further developing reading and writing skills, but it also sends the message that education is more about how a student scores or ranks and not about what they learn or accomplish (Williams 152). Teaching to the test only games the system and truly does not help students down the road—it may only give them false confidence and set them up for failure in college and rob them of precious time that could be spent on more valuable classroom activities.

Instead of test preparation, according to student surveys and school feedback, this time should be used for further reading and writing preparation. Indeed, students cannot possibly be over-prepared in reading and writing once they arrive to college. In his essay on “The War Between Reading and Writing,” Peter Elbow considers how these two skills, ones vital to college preparation, have historically been at odds with each other over instructional time. While he acknowledges that reading from a variety of sources is among the best ways for students to develop strong writing skills, he also argues that the physical act of writing and constructing meaning helps students to relate that to their own reading process (281-290). Bonus instructional time in both skills will only help bridge the gap between high school and college even more.

Especially with reading, the “process is so quick and hidden, it seems less fraught with struggle for people who are skilled.” In other words, instructors often overlook the struggle of meaning-making with reading and often neglect to model this process, whereas with writing, even the best of instructors still relate to this struggle (Elbow 290). Elbow provides some useful examples for teachers to model, including what he terms “rough readings” of a text. A rough reading is a metacognitive exercise that encourages students to read a difficult text without much preparation and then reflect on the thought process they go through during the reading and meaning-making process (290-291). This can be modeled by a student as a small group activity or by the instructor in a larger group setting. Additionally, Elbow articulates how reading is a “consumer” activity, meaning that it requires passivity from the reader and consumption of what the writer provides in the text (292). This sense of consumption connects to what Kidwell refers to as the “dualist” mentality of learning in his research on first-year college student cognitive development. With active, modeled reading strategies in the classroom, not only can teachers help students get through more difficult texts, but also model the meaning-making process of a critical reader, helping a student move from a dualist to a multiple, or even a relativist way of thinking about learning. Overall, less test preparation would give AP classes more time and freedom to hone these critical skills before heading to college, helping to transform the students’ ideas about how they learn.

Reconfiguring Class Offerings

Another way high schools can adjust their AP English program is with reordering the classes in their English curriculum. Like St. Ignatius, other schools should consider reordering their AP curriculum to streamline AP and state curriculum goals, offering British Literature with AP Literature rather than with AP Language. Otherwise, as in my own experience, teachers must combine British literature with AP Language. This task was difficult at times weaving the two courses together, but often things would work out well, such as reading Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and debating satire and its purpose in both historical and modern contexts. While sometimes this "worked," it was difficult for students to shift gears from reading and writing about literature to discussing and analyzing rhetorical theory, especially in the same 48-minute class period.

Ideas for Future Study

Besides lessening the focus on test preparation and switching the order of AP English offerings, there are other aspects that should be investigated for further studies. With all the changes that the AP program has undergone in the last fifteen years, and the most recent research of these changes is from ten years ago, more studies need to be done on the program's effectiveness. From this project, I suggest more research in the following areas:

1. How well do College Credit Plus/ dual enrollment students feel prepared for college expectations? Does the elimination of a high-stakes standardized test for credit give the benefit of extra instructional time?
2. How well are AP Capstone graduates doing in college? The two classes that make up AP Capstone (AP Research and AP Seminar) seem to tackle a lot of the areas that FYC professors claim traditional AP English students do not have enough experience in, such as research, source evaluation, and collaboration. Does exposure to these skills earlier in high school make a noted difference in college transition?
3. How do John Carroll professors consider first-year student performance in 200-level classes? Do they feel there are deficits left from what AP classes did not cover?
4. How would the students value their AP experience if college credit was not offered for high AP test scores? Would students still go the AP route again? If I had the chance to redesign my survey, this is a question I would add.

Investigating these research questions would give an even more complete picture of evaluating the best way for students to prepare for college reading and writing in the current competitive college admissions atmosphere.

Conclusion

In reaction to the multiple changes to the AP English program over the past fifteen years, including changes to the AP Language curriculum and AP Capstone, my research project

provides insight into the 10-year gap of AP research. While the program still has drawbacks, the rigor and expectations of solid AP English Language and Literature courses features the potential to prepare students for the reading and writing expectations awaiting them in the college classroom. Currently, AP offers academically rigorous activities for both the students and its teachers, including the exam, curricula, and professional development opportunities in the form of seminars, such as the week-long one I attended myself, all sponsored by The College Board. Even “the reading” and scoring of test essays itself, an invaluable experience that I will never forget, is a valuable professional development opportunity for getting high school and college writing instructors to work together towards a common goal. All of these activities can make high school English become what Joliffe describes as “focused on rhetorical theory and practice in academic and ‘real-world’ settings” (62-63). Therefore, as my research here demonstrates, AP English should elevate the high school experience to something more challenging and useful to all students, rather than simply the conventional appreciation and analysis of canonical literature and test preparation. Even if test scores dip, students still will experience the kinds of critical reading and writing skills needed for success in college and beyond. Students who score a 4 or 5, however, should have the option to receive credit for part, if not all, of their FYC requirement, with the opportunity to continue their writing development in an advanced course once in college. Thus, the AP program should continue to evolve and adapt to the ever-changing needs of high school students, but without a doubt, reading and writing courses need to be further developed at the college level to remove the stigma that these skills are met and achieved.

To that end, while the college admissions process continues to be more and more competitive, schools need to get back to their sole purpose: to educate. Accelerating education and reducing learning to earning credit hours does a disservice to our students. Providing them the appropriate learning opportunity when they are ready, however, is what schools need to continue doing. We need to keep our focus on preparing students, not simply pushing them through secondary education.

AP[®] English Language and Composition

Course Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to help students “write effectively and confidently in their college courses across the curriculum and in their professional and personal lives.” (The College Board, *AP[®] English Course Description*, May 2007, May 2008, p. 6) The course is organized according to the requirements and guidelines of the current *AP English Course Description*, and, therefore, students are expected to read critically, think analytically, and communicate clearly both in writing and speech.

Grading System:

Tests, Projects, and Essays 40%

Quizzes 20%

Class work and Participation 20%

Homework 20%

Most lessons begin with a warm-up or anticipatory task. These focus on a grammatical or writing concept that connects to the day’s class work.

Students are able to make corrections on any assignment (essay, test, homework, etc.). These need to be accompanied by a written explanation for each correction explaining why the original answer or attempt was incorrect and why the correction is superior.

Course Organization

The course is organized by Rhetoric mode.

Each unit requires students to acquire and use rich vocabulary, to use standard English grammar, and to understand the importance of diction and syntax in an author’s style.

Therefore, students are expected to develop the following:

- 1 • a wide-ranging vocabulary used appropriately and effectively;
- 2 • a variety of sentence structures, including appropriate use of subordination and coordination;
- 3 • logical organization, enhanced by specific techniques to increase coherence, such as repetition, transitions, and emphasis;
- 4 • a balance of generalization and specific illustrative detail; and
- 5 • an effective use of rhetoric including controlling tone, establishing and maintaining voice, and achieving appropriate emphasis through diction and sentence structure.

(College Board AP English Course Description, May 2007, May 2008.)

p. 8)

For each reading assignment students must identify the following:

- 1 • Thesis or Claim
- 2 • Tone or Attitude
- 3 • Purpose
- 4 • Audience and Occasion
- 5 • Evidence or Data
- 6 • Appeals: Logos, Ethos, Pathos
- 7 • Assumptions or Warrants
- 8 • Style (how the author communicates his message: rhetorical mode, rhetorical devices always including diction and syntax)

Students will be divided into groups that will present one mode to the class, creating a mini unit. Students will interpret, analyze, and teach their assigned group's mode.

Syllabus: English III AP

Introduction: AP English Course Description, Class Rules and Responsibilities, Grading System, Summer Reading, Rhetorical Modes

Reading:

- *Sin and Syntax: How to Craft Wickedly Effective Prose* by Constance Hale
- additional summer reading option chosen by student (list varies annually)
 - * 1 fiction choice
 - * 1 non-fiction choice

Assessments:

Presentation: Write a short narrative or descriptive speech about what you honestly do in preparing for and writing a writing assignment. Be honest in specific in all stages of the writing process.

Essay: Summer Reading

Prompt: After reading *Sin and Syntax*, analyze the author's use of stylistic devices in your summer reading book choices and express an appreciation of the effects the devices create. Support your key ideas and viewpoints with accurate and detailed references to the text.

UNIT 1: Rhetorical Devices

READING:

Roskelly, Hephzibah and David A. Jolliffe, "Rhetoric in Our Lives" from *Everyday Use*

White, E.B., "Once More to the Lake"
Jefferson, Thomas, "The Declaration of Independence"
Eighner, Lars, "On Dumpster Diving"
Lincoln, Abraham, "President Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address"

Readings on Current Events: Articles that reflect claims and central ideas made by the authors studied in this unit, or utilization of rhetorical devices studied

VIEWING:

An English-speaking world [video recording] : mother tongue / a BBC-TV co-production with MacNeil-Lehrer Productions in association with WNET.

Assessments:

Quizzes: Vocabulary-- rhetorical devices and their application

Homework: Students answer questions after reading the essays listed above about the author's purpose, effective use of rhetorical strategies, and essay structures

Composition: Journal entry

Prompt: When have you used rhetoric effectively in your life?

AP Practice test: Prompt: Read "President Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address" and write an essay analyzing the rhetorical techniques Lincoln uses to express his thoughts about the war and the country's future.

UNIT 2: Description

Reading:

- Soto, Gary, "The Jacket"
- Steinbach, Alice, "The Miss Dennis School of Writing"
- McDonald, Cherokee Paul, "A View from the Bridge"

Assessments:

Homework: Students answer questions after reading the essays listed above about the author's purpose, effective use of rhetorical strategies, and essay structures

Practice AP essay test: Descriptive essay

Prompt: Use detailed description in an essay to explain a relationship, problem, or phenomenon. Consider focusing on a subject whose importance and possible consequences are not readily apparent to readers, or encourage your audience to critically view actions and attitudes they take for granted.

UNIT 3: Narrative

Reading:

- Junger, Sebastian, "The Lion in Winter"
- Mebane, Mary, "The Back of the Bus"
- Orwell, George, "Shooting an Elephant"
- * Anonymous, from "Beowulf"
- Gardner, John, from *Grendel*
- Hurston, Zora Neale. Excerpt from *Dust Tracks on a Road*

Assessments:

Presentation: A group of students will present the Description strategy to the class, creating a mini unit. Students will be assessed on how well they interpret, analyze, and teach their assigned group's mode.

Homework: Students answer questions after reading the essays listed above about the author's purpose, effective use of rhetorical strategies, and essay structures

Quiz: Vocabulary "Beowulf"

Test: Prompt: What motivated Gardner to retell the Beowulf myth from Grendel's point of view?

Quizzes: On events, themes, and strategies encountered in "Beowulf." These check for understanding of meaning and strategies.

Test: Read the excerpt from *Dust Tracks on a Road* by Zora Neale Hurston and answer the questions based on rhetorical strategies, devices, and author's purpose.

UNIT 4: Satire

Independent reading: Student selection of apolitical cartoons—discussed in class for the purpose of applying SOAPSTone

Reading:

Chaucer, Geoffrey, "Prologue" from *The Canterbury Tales*

Rich, Frank, "Happy Talk News Covers a War"

"Area Senior Suspects Grandchild's Visit Just Some Sort of Assignment" from *The Onion*

Swift, Jonathan, "A Modest Proposal"

VIEWING:

Segment from *Anchorman*, starring Will Ferrell and Christina Applegate

ASSESSMENTS:

Quizzes: Students are given a quiz on most readings. These check for understanding of meaning and strategies.

Test: identifying satirical techniques and using them to create their own political cartoon

Homework: Students answer questions after reading the essays listed above about the author's purpose, effective use of rhetorical strategies, and essay structures.

Presentation: Explain Chaucer's view and satirical purpose for particular characters introduced in the "Prologue"

AP Practice test: "Magnasoles" from *The Onion*: Evaluate the use of satire and rhetorical devices that pertain to the author's purpose.

UNIT 5: Example

Reading:

- The Onion, "All Seven Deadly Sins Committed at Church Bake Sale"
- Lederer, Richard, "English is a Crazy Language"
- Rooney, Andy, "In and of Ourselves We Trust"
- Straight, Susan, "Cartilage"
- Karr, Mary, "Dysfunctional Nation"

Assessments:

- A group of students will present the Example Strategy to the class, creating a mini unit. Students will be assessed on how well they interpret, analyze, and teach their assigned group's mode.
- Practice AP Test: All students will read "Aren't I a Woman?" They will answer multiple choice questions and short answer questions:
 - What is Truth's purpose and how does she achieve her purpose?
 - How does she use Aristotle's rhetoric to achieve her purpose? Was it effective?
- Homework: After reading the essays, the students need to answer questions after reading the essay listed above about the author's purpose, effective use of rhetorical strategies, and essay structures.

UNIT 6: Argument

Reading:

Orwell, George, *Animal Farm*

King, Martin Luther, Jr., Letter, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Lewis, Michael, "The Case Against Tipping"
Bower, Stephanie, "What's the Rush? Speed Yields Mediocrity in Local Television News" (student essay)
O'Neill, Shannon, "Literature Hacked and Torn Apart: Censorship in Public Schools" (student essay)
Lincoln, Abraham, "The Gettysburg Address"
Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions"

Assessments:

- Essay: Students must analyze a rhetorical technique in *Animal Farm* and explain how the use of this strategy helps accomplish Orwell's purpose.
- Test: Students will write and answer multiple-choice questions about rhetorical devices, strategies, and techniques for *Animal Farm* – questions about argument are also asked.
- Test: All students read O'Neill, Shannon, "Literature Hacked and Torn Apart: Censorship in Public Schools" (student essay) and identify and analyze claim, support, evidence, and rebuttal.
- Essay: Students write a research-based argumentative paper about an assigned topic. Students are familiarized with evaluation, usage, and citation of primary and secondary print and online sources. After introducing these concepts, the students form their own argument on provided topics. Students must synthesize information acquired from outside sources in order to support their arguments. Paper is done in MLA format with a works cited page of at least five sources (with two of them print sources). Chicago and APA styles are also discussed in the manner of why different disciplines utilize each. Multiple drafts are written peers help revise and edit drafts. Final and two additional drafts are collected.
- Homework: Students analyze essays for argument components.
- Journal: After completing homework, students discuss argument components in each essay with class. Then, the students will write their comments and observations about the discussion of argument components in the essay.

MIDTERM

Students will take an AP test for their midterm. They will read four passages and answer 45 to 55 multiple-choice questions. These questions are modeled after the questions that will appear on the AP test. In addition to the multiple-choice questions, the students will write an essay based on *Animal Farm*. The prompt will require the students to consider purpose, rhetorical modes, rhetorical strategies, rhetorical techniques, and/or rhetorical devices. This essay is graded on the AP rubric.

UNIT 7: Process Analysis

Reading:

- Didion, Joan, "On Keeping a Notebook"
- Kilbourne, Jean, E., "Beauty...And the Beast of Advertising"
- Fontana, David, "Working with Dreams"
- Pappu, Sridhar, "Deranged Marriage"
- Gaffney, Karin, "Losing Weight" (student essay)

Assessments:

- A group of students will present the Process Analysis Strategy to the class, creating a mini unit. Students will be assessed on how well they interpret, analyze, and teach their assigned group's mode.
- Homework: Read "Working with Dreams" by David Fontana and determine whether it uses explanatory or descriptive process analysis. Finally, write how Fontana achieves his purpose using process analysis.
- Essay: Read "Losing Weight" by Karin Gaffney and write an essay describing Gaffney's use of descriptive process analysis.
- Essay: Students write their own descriptive or explanatory essay. Each student will read his/her essay and his/her peers discuss what his/her purpose is for writing the essay.
- Homework: Students read essays and analyze how process analysis strategy and rhetorical techniques (specifically tone, diction, and syntax) help form the author's purpose.

Unit 8: Cause and Effect**Reading:**

- Murphy, Cullen, "Hello, Darkness"
- Buckley, William F. Jr., "Why Don't We Complain"
- Machiavelli, Niccolo, "The Morals of the Prince"
- Winn, Marie, "Television: The Plug-In Drug"
- Egri, Sarah, "How a Public Document Affected My Life" (student essay)
- Roach, Mary, "My Father the Geezer"

Assessments:

- A group of students will present the Cause and Effect Strategy to the class, creating a mini unit. Students will be assessed on how well they interpret, analyze, and teach their assigned group's mode.
- Homework: Read "Hello, Darkness" by Cullen Murphy and respond to SOAPSTone. Students discuss their responses in class.

- Homework: While reading the various essays, the students will analyze why author uses cause/effect strategy in each essay. (There will be various reasons depending on purpose, audience, occasion, etc.)
- Test: Students will read the essay “My Father the Geezer” by Mary Roach and answer multiple-choice questions focusing on rhetorical devices, grammatical structures, and rhetorical strategies.

UNIT 9: Comparison and Contrast

READING:

Plato, “Allegory of the Cave”
 Jordan, Suzanne Britt, “That Lean and Hungry Look”
 Barry, Dave, “The Ugly Truth About Beauty”
 Catton, Bruce, “Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts”
 Mukherjee, Bharati, “Two Way to Belong in America”

Assessments:

Presentation: A group of students will present the Comparison/Contrast strategy to the class, creating a mini unit. Students will be assessed on how well they interpret, analyze, and teach their assigned group's mode.

Homework: Students answer questions after reading the essays listed above about the author's purpose, effective use of rhetorical strategies, and essay structures.

AP Practice test: Read “Two Way to Belong in America” by Bharati Mukherjee and analyze her choice of rhetorical strategy and its effectiveness in conveying her purpose.

UNIT 10: Definition

Reading:

- Carter, Stephen L., “The Insufficiency of Honesty”
- Chambers, Veronica, “Mother’s Day”
- Savage, Dan, “Role Reversal”
- Liu, Eric, “Notes of a Native Speaker”
- Steele, Shelby, “On Being Black and Middle Class”

Assessments:

- Homework: Choose 3-4 essays we have already read and analyze the authors’ use of the definition strategy.

- Essay: After discussing “The Insufficiency of Honesty” by Stephen L. Carter, the students will write an essay responding to this prompt:
Carter’s title, “The Insufficiency of Honesty,” suggests both a focus for the essay and an interesting approach to explaining why a particular quality is inadequate. Borrow this approach for an essay. Explain why your subject is inadequate, insufficient, or incomplete.
- Test: Students will read, “On Being Black and Middle Class” and answer multiple-choice questions that address rhetorical strategies, rhetorical techniques, and rhetorical devices.

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Appendix B: Example of an AP Language assignment that notes an intended audience

Editorial Cartoon Project Due date _____

I would like you to locate and print out or make copies of three political cartoons. These can be found in newspapers and news magazines, or just google “political cartoons” and you’ll find plenty of websites dedicated to political cartoons.

In the College Board’s course description, it says students are to analyze graphics and visual images and determine how such images relate to written texts and serve as alternative forms. Therefore, for each cartoon, I’d like you to write an essay analyzing the artist’s purpose.

Consider the following questions:

- What is the event or issue that inspired the cartoon?
- Who is his or her intended audience?
- Are there any real people in the cartoon? Who is portrayed in the cartoon?
- Are there symbols in the cartoon? What are they and what do they represent?
- What is the cartoonist’s opinion about the topic portrayed in the cartoon?
- Do you agree or disagree with the cartoonist’s opinion? Why?

Staple the finished project together in the following descending order:

1. 1st cartoon (on top)
2. 1st essay
3. 2nd cartoon
4. 2nd essay
5. 3rd cartoon
6. 3rd essay

Appendix C: Survey given to John Carroll students that used AP credit for EN 125 (Fall 2015-Fall 2019)

1. What was your high school and graduation year?
2. What major and/or minor did you graduate with from JCU?
3. Did you come to JCU with an intended major? If so, what was it?
4. Which English AP test(s) did you take your junior year of high school?
5. Which English AP test(s) did you take your senior year of high school?
6. How did you prepare for the **AP English Language** test?
 - a. Took test without any preparation
 - b. AP class was offered by high school
 - c. Prepped self with study materials only
 - d. Prepped with a private tutor
 - e. Other (explain)
 - f. N/A
7. How did you prepare for the **AP English Literature** test?
 - a. Took test without any preparation
 - b. AP class was offered by high school
 - c. Prepped self with study materials only
 - d. Prepped with a private tutor
 - e. Other (explain)
 - f. N/A
8. What was your original intention for taking part in the AP English program?
 - a. Challenge self
 - b. Earn college credit
 - c. Other (explain)
9. How well do you feel the **AP English Language** program prepared you for college writing? (1- not at all; 5 extremely well)

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
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10. How well do you feel the **AP English Language** program prepared you for college reading material? (1- not at all; 5 extremely well)

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
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11. How well do you feel the **AP English Literature** program prepared you for college writing? (1- not at all; 5 extremely well)

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
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12. How well do you feel the **AP English Literature** program prepared you for college reading material? (1- not at all; 5 extremely well)

1	2	3	4	5	N/A
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13. If you had the choice, would you accept JCU credit again and opt out of EN 125?

- a. Yes, it helped me financially
- b. Yes, I felt prepared for college expectations
- c. No, but I would still participate in the AP program
- d. No, it was a waste of my time and money
- e. No, I would have taken a College Credit Plus course for the requirement instead

Explain your choice.

14. What about your experience in the AP program helped you prepare for college the most?

- a. Sitting for the exam(s)
- b. A particular writing assignment
- c. Reading college-level texts
- d. Class discussions
- e. Guidance from a readily available high school teacher

Explain your choice.

15. What would have helped make your transition to college reading and writing easier? (Select all that apply)

- a. More quality writing assignments and practice
- b. Reading more college-level texts

- c. More opportunities for class discussion
- d. Higher expectations from your instructor
- e. Less concentration on test-taking strategies

Please use the space below to explain.

Appendix D: Survey explanation given to participants

Measuring Transitional Success from AP English to College Writing at John Carroll University

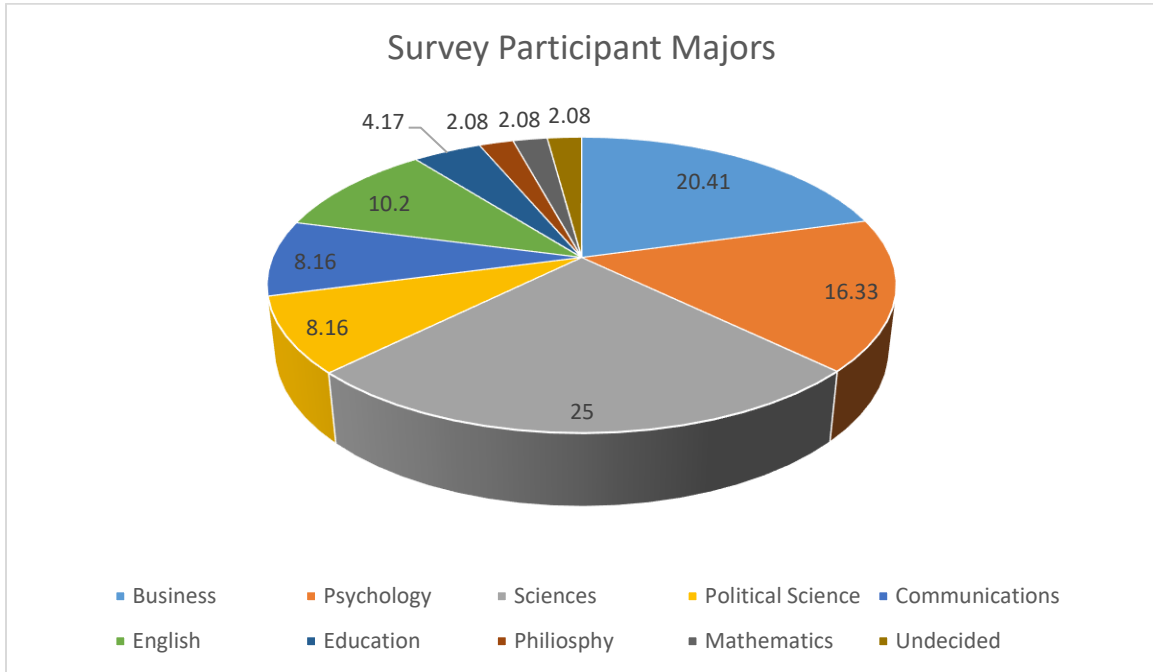
This is a study being conducted by a student researcher from John Carroll University. In this study, I am trying to determine how well the Advanced Placement English program has prepared students for reading and writing success at the college level, specifically at John Carroll University. With the data gathered from this survey, I hope to help future JCU students transition more seamlessly into the college environment.

You will be asked to complete the following survey which should take approximately 10-15 minutes. If at any time you no longer wish to participate, you may close your browser and leave the survey. Your name or any other identifier will not be collected in this survey, and your personal data will not be identified in the results. All responses will be kept completely confidential. Your de-identified data will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Please realize that there are risks to participating in internet-based research with regard to potential breaches of privacy or anonymity. Be aware that some employers monitor employee internet usage. Please be sure to close your internet browser once you have finished the survey to protect your privacy. In addition, you can further safeguard your privacy by deleting the webpage history from your browser after closing the survey link.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or any of these procedures, please contact Heidi Lateulere at hlateulere18@jcu.edu. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may quit the survey or skip any question at any time without penalty. By continuing with this survey, you confirm that you are at least 18 years of age and that you consent to participate. If you do not consent to participate, please exit this survey or close your browser.

Appendix E: Pie Chart of Survey Participants' Majors



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