

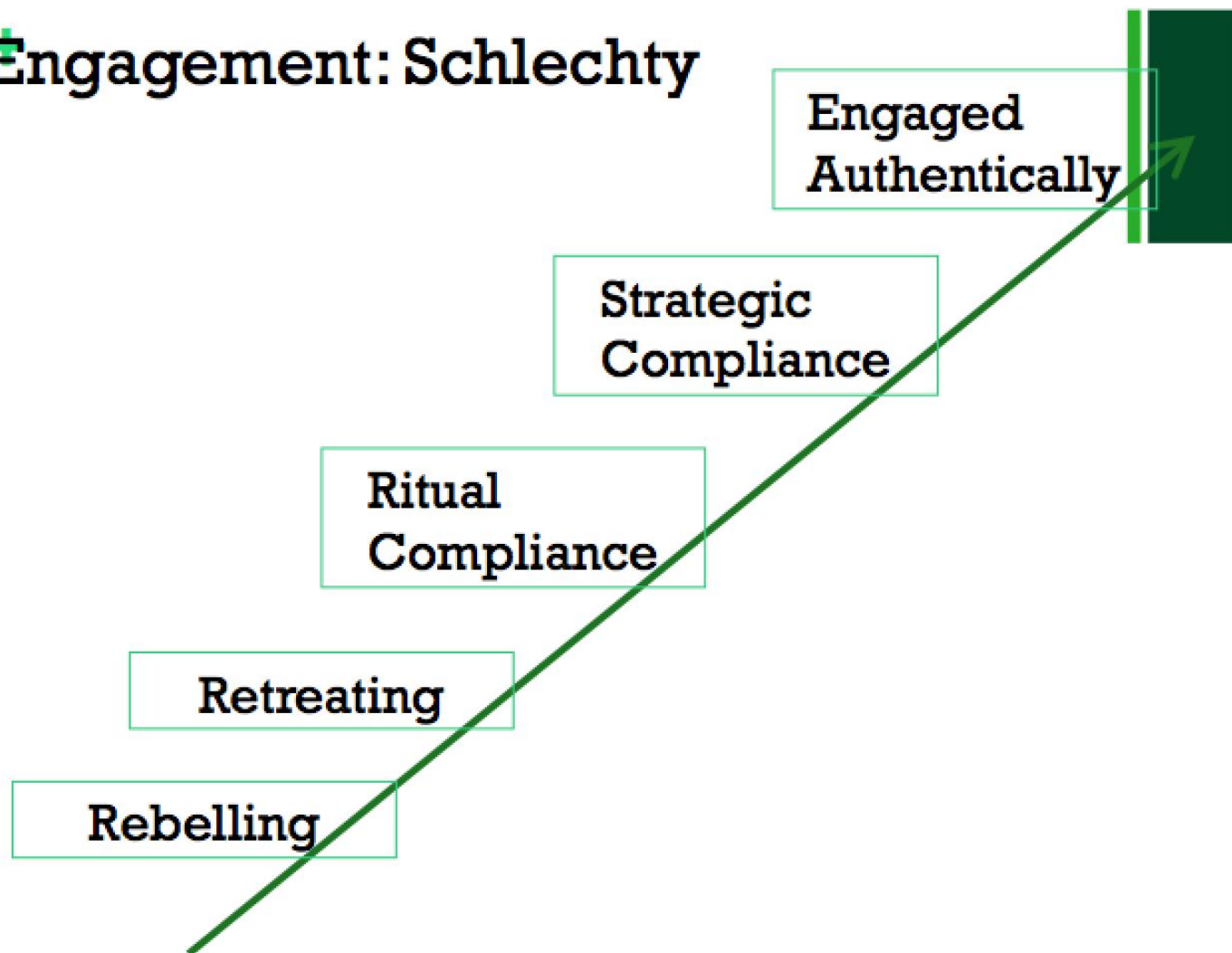
Report on WHS J-Term Pilot

Westwood School Committee
November 5, 2018

J-Term: A Refresher

- A 5-day intensive, immersive learning experience in June
- Students choose one course
- Pass/fail, 1.25 credits
- Courses are designed to evoke authentic engagement in learning
- An opportunity for students to experience a different kind of learning experience that isn't possible in 47 minute chunks
- A creative professional experience for teachers to work without the confines of state standards, assessments, and time pressure

Engagement: Schlechty



J-Term: Vision Statement

J-Term at WHS provides an opportunity for students to dive deeply into an existing area of interest or explore a new interest during an immersive learning experience of their choosing. J-Term courses are challenging and experiential; they involve, not just inform. Students explore, create, study, think and do. J-Term allows students to experience learning without the external controls that steer much of their education (e.g. classes constrained by bells and achievement measured by a grade). While each J-Term course is unique, all courses culminate in:

- a final product or performance, and/or*
- a shared experience, and/or*
- a reflection upon what was learned*

J-Term 2018:
June 18th-June 22nd





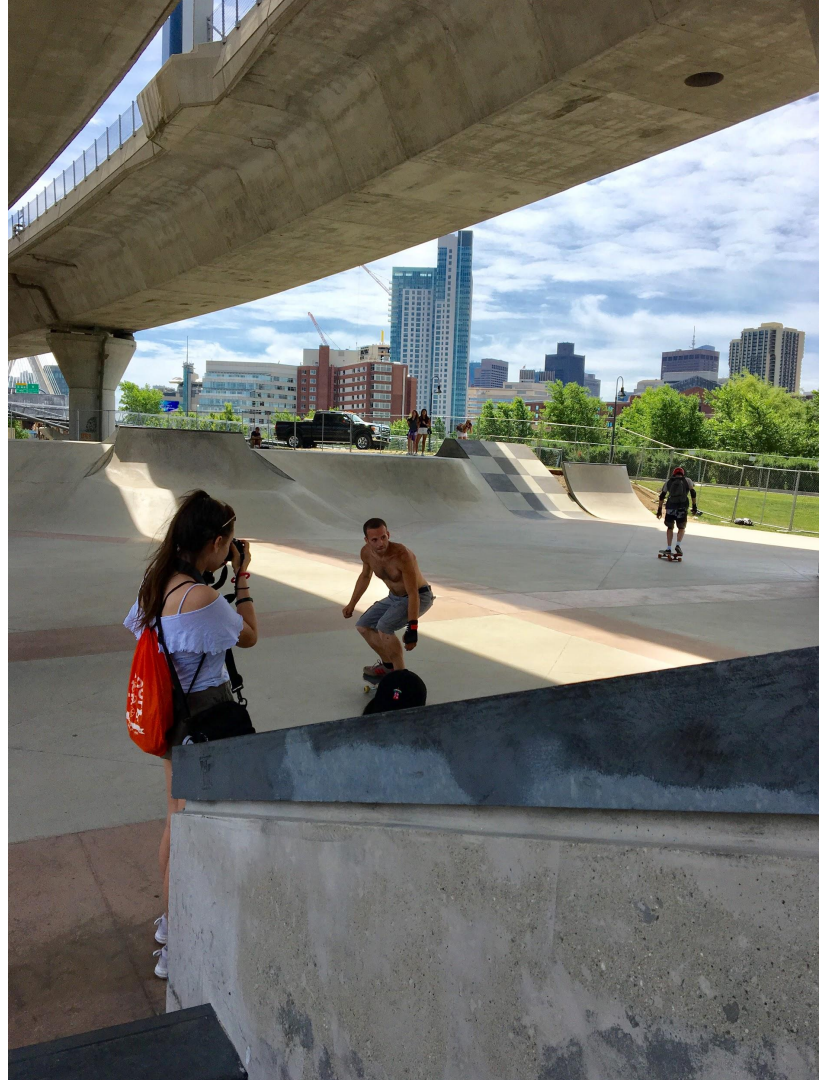








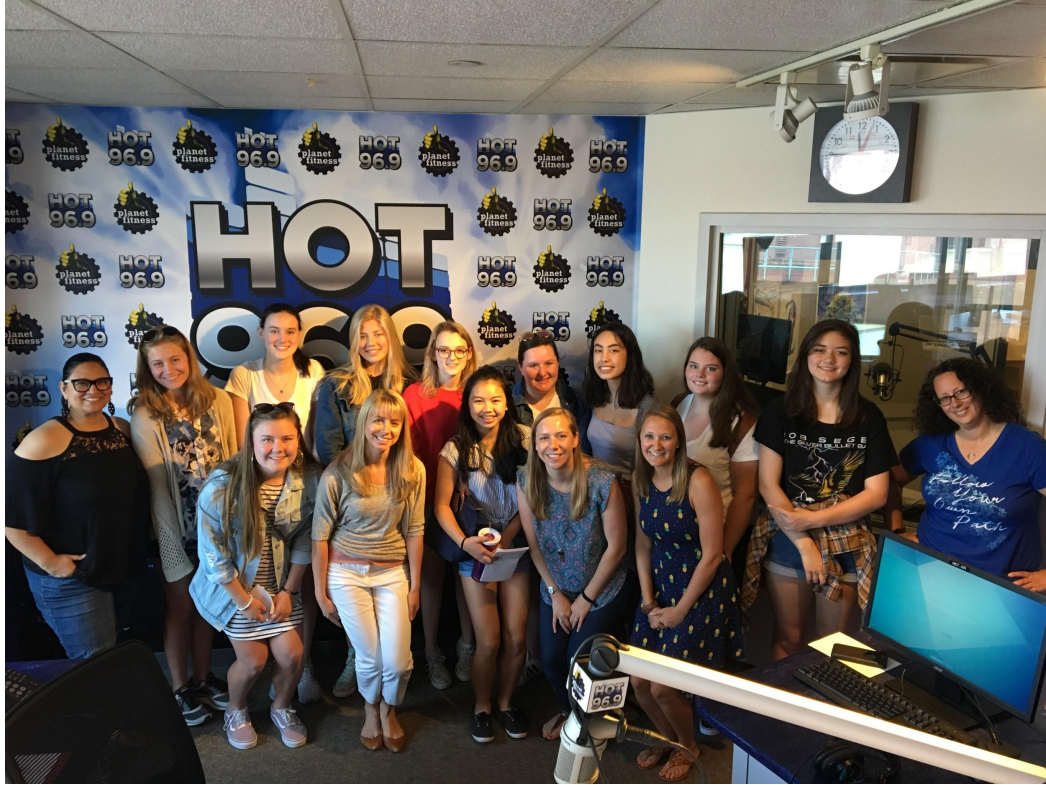


















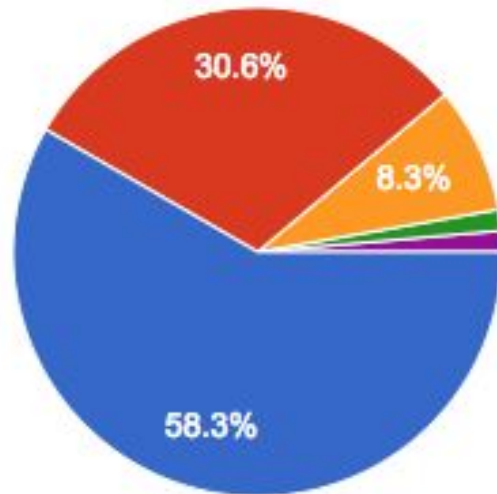
2018 Facts & Figures

- 36 courses
- 750 students total (9th, 10th, and 11th graders)
- Co-taught courses (34 of 36)
- Courses mixed by grade level
- Average class size: 20.8 students
- Student/Faculty ratio: 8:1
- 58% of students received first choice course, 89% top 2 choice, 98% top 3
- 26 of 36 courses involved some form of off site travel during the week.
- Instructional Aides assigned to courses based on special education needs
- Average number of student absences per day: 35.5 (4.7%)

Course Development Process



April 27, 2016: Concept Rollout to Faculty



- I'm ready to "green light" J-Term conceptually and determine next st...
- I'm feeling positive about the idea, but need more discussion before "gree...
- I'm on the fence about the idea. (I feel neutral or I feel equal parts positive/...
- I'm skeptical about the idea. I'm willing to talk further, but am leaning toward...
- I'm not interested in pursuing the idea any further.

J-Term Steering Committee

17 members (12 teachers, 4 administrators, 1 school committee member)

12 meetings between November 28, 2016 - June 4, 2018

Tasks:

- Assess viability and value of proposed courses
- Meet with teaching teams to provide feedback for course development
- Plan and execute logistics (transportation, budget, supplies, etc.)
- Gather and analyze feedback from staff & students
- Develop faculty PD sessions

Professional Development

2016-2017: Full day PD plus 6 additional Early Release Wednesdays

2017-2018: 7 Early Release Wednesdays

Structure of J-Term PD Sessions Varied, Including:

- Faculty-Wide training on skills of design thinking, creativity, and on curriculum and instruction (e.g. tying courses and units around essential questions, structuring varied learning experiences, etc.)
- Small-group peer feedback sessions
- Individualized time for teaching teams to develop courses

What's
holding back
your
**Creative
Confidence?**

Fear of the messy unknown

Fear of being judged

Fear of the first step

Fear of loosing control

-Tom Kelley & David Kelley
GM & Chairman of IDEO

November 8, 2016
Full Day PD

Exploring J-Term Course Models

Mount Vernon High School (IA)

Newark Academy (NJ)

University High School (IN)





1. Guy with army haircut



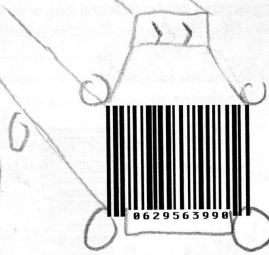
2. Sky scrapers



3. meadow with tall grass



1. mustache



2. grill of a cat and license plate



3. comb



4. A fixed shoe



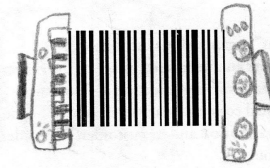
5. Toothbrush



6. Giant harp



4. goggles



5. acordian



6. curtains



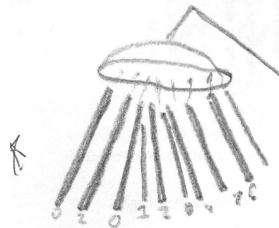
7. Mouth



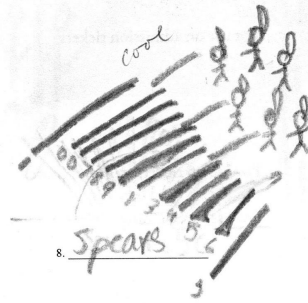
8. piano keys



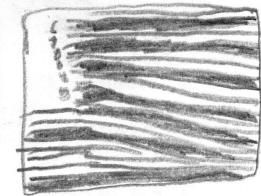
9. spaghetti



7. Shower



8. spears

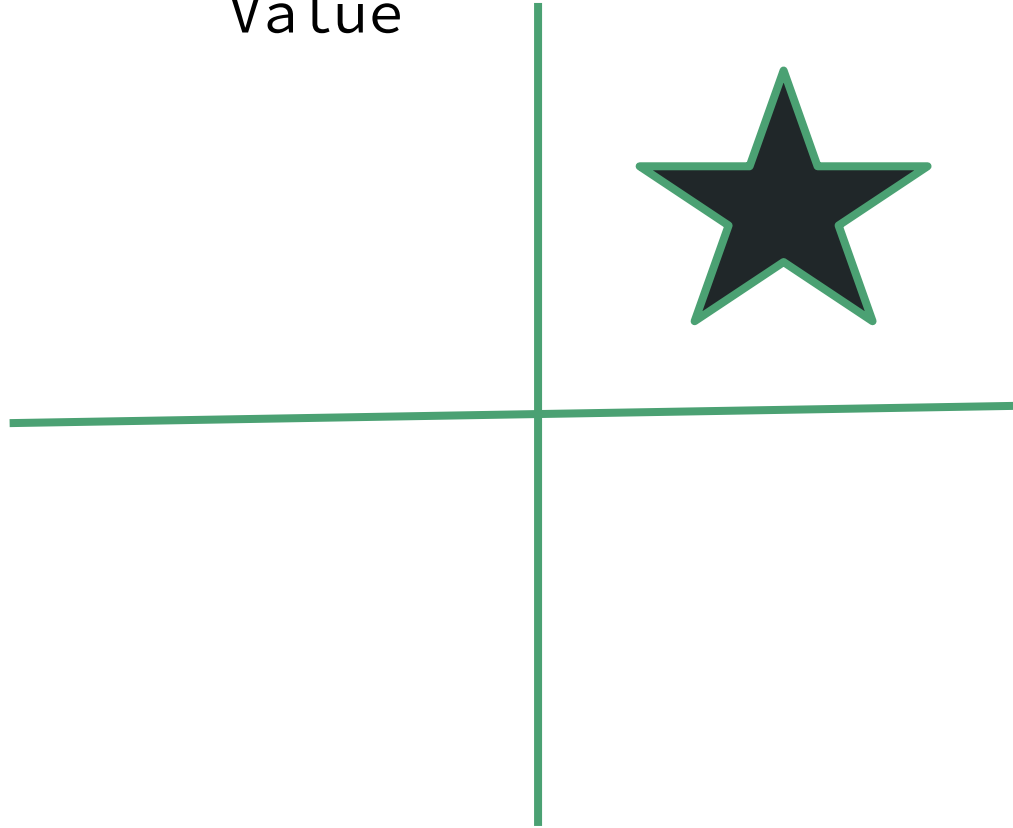


9. American Flag

Start with the SIX provided images, then sketch THREE more ideas by drawing your own bar codes and altering them. You may add to, or remove part of, the original image. You may change the orientation or distort some of the original image. LABEL each of your sketches.



Value



Engagement

Anonymous 1yr

Create graphic novel



I LIKE THIS BECAUSE...

I WONDER IF...

This is not a creative writing genre students usually get to try!

Combines art + creative writing skills

APPEALS TO ACADEMICS

may design elements / logical challenge

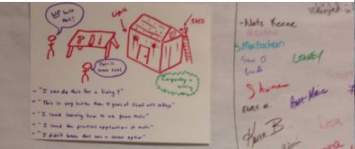
Post: The Cherry is a collection

They'll have enough time. They will read/writing enough notes they could explore a contemporary social issue for greater value!

There are graphic novelists a professional illustrators who use their word in their stories/workplaces.

Anonymous 1yr

Nailed It: Carpentry and Wiring



I Like this because...

My wife thinks I'm incapable (lol) it's a hands-on learning experience that does not seem like a chore.

It's a great skill to have!

Great + useful skills! ✓

appeals to a non-traditional student

positioned as a community service

Fun way to try out a whole social ideal!

It's encouraging to use power tools!

I wonder if...

students will appreciate it more?

Income for living: \$1500 - \$2000

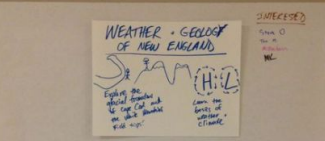
WE have 140 to 1600? 17?

Final project could be community service oriented

The build thing/money on what has a problem to them? Fun

Anonymous 1yr

Weather & Geology of New England



I LIKE THIS BECAUSE...

SILENCE & SOLITUDE

IT'S TRADITIONAL

Lots of connections to chem/physics outside we had no extra variety in it!

great topic to teach kids!

local focus

I WONDER IF...

students are as engaged with the community as we are in our school? personal choice are as important in attendance?

it can be so hard!

great tradition, potential for more engagement

It would have been a huge topic to explore in the past a pure joy

It's really unique opportunity to study local history

Students will create products to encourage them to be an advocate

Anonymous 1yr

WHS Story Corps



I LIKE THIS BECAUSE...

Students are engaged with the community

personal choice are as important in attendance?

it can be so hard!

great tradition, potential for more engagement

It would have been a huge topic to explore in the past a pure joy

It's really unique opportunity to study local history

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It's really unique opportunity to study local history

Students will create products to encourage them to be an advocate

Anonymous 1yr

Boston Foodie Tours



I LIKE THIS BECAUSE...

all cultures are defined by their food!

MEETING THE OWNERS!?

New horizons

Opportunity to bring in history, anthropology, sociology...

exploration

So fun to eat!

History + food - Yes!

I'm too

I WONDER IF...

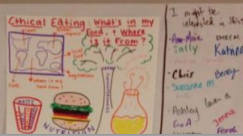
Food is part of the culture?

Food appreciation about the culture?

Food like there made to be a meaningful experience that is a link to their local culture?

Anonymous 1yr

Ethical Eating: what's in my food and where is it from?



Ethical Eating: what's in my food & where is it from?

I might be interested in this because I'm a vegetarian

Choir members in Ethical Eating

Apple pie has a lot of food

Anonymous 1yr

Chemistry of the Kitchen

Anonymous 1yr

Climb Your Family Tree! An Intro to Genealogy

Anonymous 1yr

How to be Happy



How to be Happy!

Stick figure with a smiley face.

I might be interested in this because I'm a vegetarian

Anonymous 1yr

Design Challenge



Design Challenge

I might be interested in this because I'm a vegetarian

Anonymous 1yr

Following Thoreau in a Canoe



FOLLOWING THOREAU IN A CANOE

I might be interested in this because I'm a vegetarian

Choir members in Ethical Eating

Apple pie has a lot of food

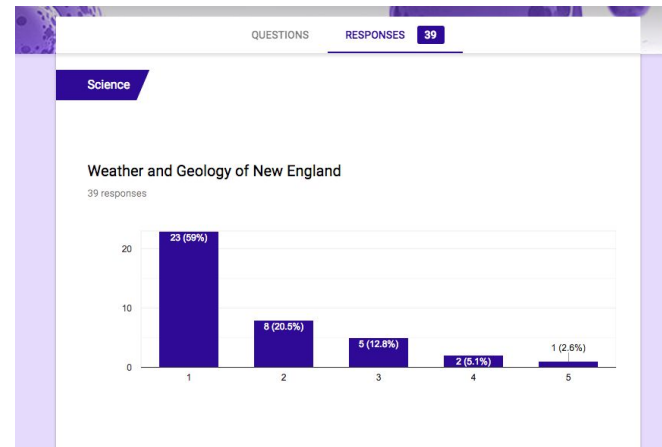


What was the best question you got from colleagues that pushed your thinking?

Student Focus Groups

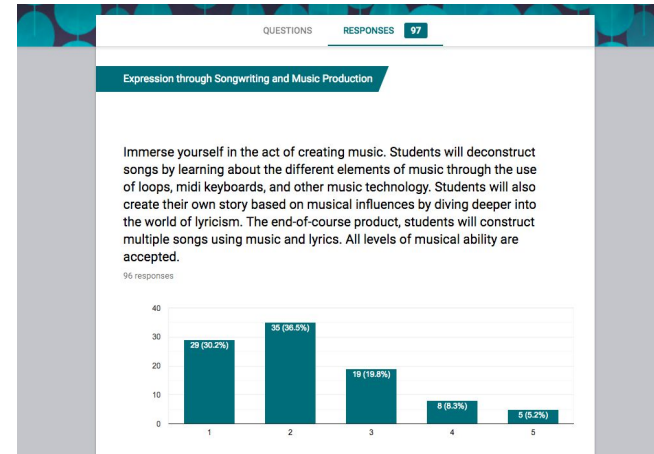
November 2016

- ~50 students (9-12, cross-level)
- Discussion and open-ended survey questions
- Titles only, no teacher names



February 2017

- ~100 students
- Discussion and open-ended survey questions
- Course descriptions w/ teacher names



2018 Course List

*A Deep Dive into Anime and Fan Theory**

*A Foodie's Guide to Boston**

Art of the Moving Title

Basic Carpentry and Wiring

Be a MAKER: Experiments in Sculpture

Be Afraid: Horror in Film and Literature

Become a Certified SCUBA Diver

*Bon Appétit: French Immersion Week**

Camp Counselor Boot Camp

Catan & Beyond: Exploration of Strategy Games

Climb Your Family Tree: An Intro to Genealogy

*CSI Westwood**

*DeMOCKracy**

*Destination Aviation**

Detail Vehicles like a Professional

Dissecting Disney

*Exploring Scientific Discovery & Truth**

Expression through Music Production

Faster, Better, Stronger: Be Your Fitness Pal

Hot Topics in Biotechnology

Life Hacks: #Adulting

Numbers Game: Analytics & Economics in Sport

Painting with Purpose

Photography in the Field

Project Runway: Own Your Style

Psychology of Teamwork and Teambuilding

Pursuit of Happiness

So You Think You Can Rock

*Society through Sports on Screen**

Sow the Seeds: Start a School Garden

Spanish Immersion Experience

Summit New England's Peaks

*The Criminal Mind**

The Stories that Connect Us

Top Chef Westwood

Weather and Geology of New England



SPANISH IMMERSION EXPERIENCE

Instructors: Dr. Lee, Ms. Altenbach, Ms. Goldstein & Ms. Goldenberg

Immerse yourself in Spanish for a week without leaving the country! Students will explore the Hispanic cultures available to us in the Boston area by visiting cultural sites such as a Spanish art exhibit and the Taza Chocolate Factory. We will prepare and taste foods and interview restaurant owners from multiple Spanish speaking countries such as Peru, Cuba, Venezuela, and/or Spain. The group will spend time meeting community members who work in health and legal fields to assist new immigrants to the United States. We will round out our experience by exploring music, sports, and dance in Spanish. Parts of the week will be spent out of the classroom speaking to native speakers. Students must be in at least Spanish 2 or above to enroll (or have at least intermediate proficiency), as we will use the language throughout the day.

whsjterm.org

J-Term: 37 COURSE OPTIONS

something for everyone

A CHANCE TO:

DIVE DEEPLY into
an existing area of
interest

**EXPLORE A NEW
INTEREST**
during an
immersive learning
experience of your
choosing

June 2018

**Students in this
course, will:**

- Visit cultural sites in Boston**
- Prepare and taste food**
- Converse with native speakers**



Sponsored
by



FOUNDATION FOR
WESTWOOD
EDUCATION

Parent Communication

Course “Shopping”

November 20-21, 2017

Teaching Teams run 10-minute sessions to introduce their course to students

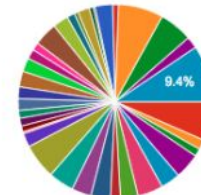
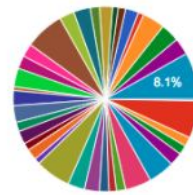
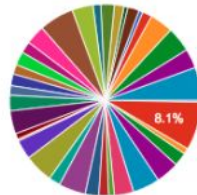
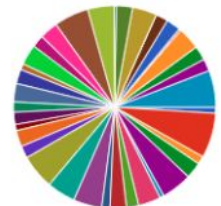
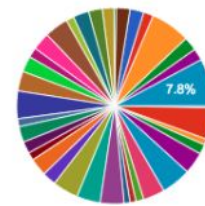
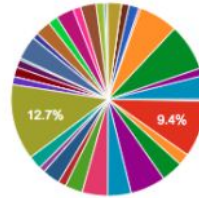
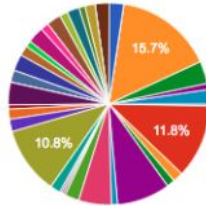
Students select 8 courses to “shop”



BE AFRAID, BE VERY AFRAID
MS. BERGIEL, MS. HOLMES, AND MS. FERCY

WHAT MAKES THINGS SCARY?

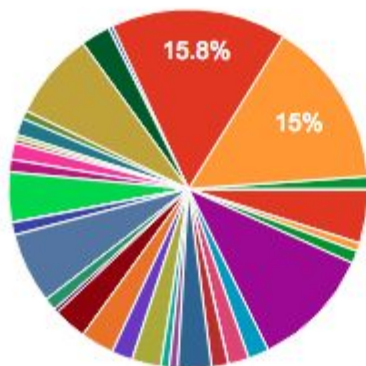
- ☪ WHAT KIND OF SCARE DO YOU LIKE? WHY?
- ☪ MOVIE
- ☪ WHAT MADE THAT SCARY?
- ☪ COURSE INFO
- ☪ SCARE FACTOR WARNING
- ☪ QUESTIONS



Student Registration: November 28-December 1, 2017

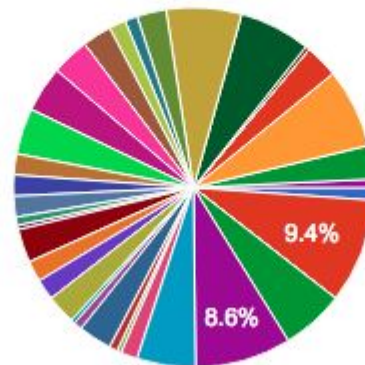
Please select your **FIRST** preference for J-Term 2018.

266 responses



Please select your **SECOND** preference for J-Term 2018.

266 responses



Cost: Pilot Year 2018

Total Cost:	\$52,385
Less value of durable goods:	<u>\$9,939</u>
	\$42,446

Cost detail:	Transportation	\$13,158
	Consumable materials	\$11,638
	Entrance fees	\$10,098
	Speaker fees	\$355
	Food (course-related)	\$4,017
	<u>Other</u>	<u>\$3,180</u>
	Total	\$42,446 (\$57 per pupil)



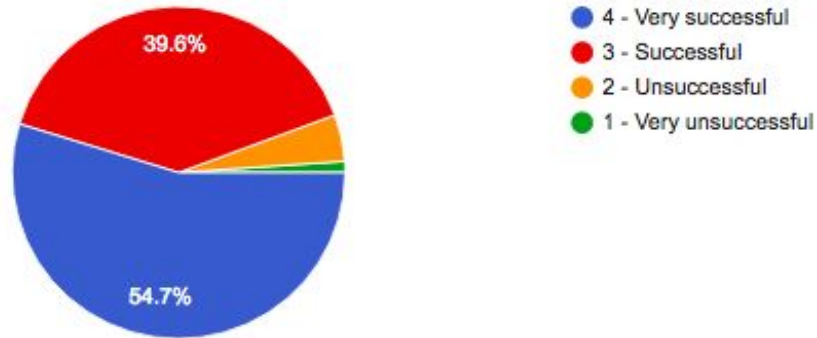
Program Assessment

Feedback from
Students, Faculty &
Parents

Students (Quantitative)

J-term's mission was to provide an opportunity for you to dive deeply into an existing area of interest or explore a new interest. J-Term courses were intended to be challenging and experiential; to involve, not just inform. The goal was for you to explore, create, study, think and do. Based on your experience, how successful was J-term in achieving its mission?

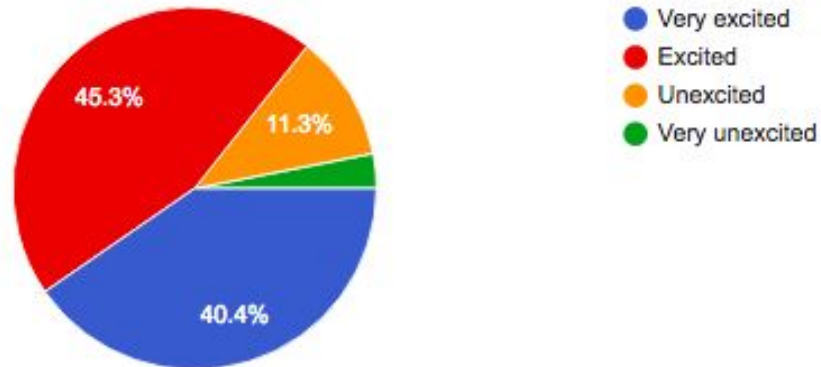
550 responses



Students (Quantitative)

How excited would you be to participate in another J-Term course next year?

550 responses



Students (Qualitative)

Theme: Students were generally excited to attend school, viewing J-Term as a less stressful learning experience without the external pressures of grades or homework:

*“J-term was more of a relaxed place to be. The field trips made it fun to learn about new things. Also being with kids from different grades, I met new people from upper and lower grades. **It was similar in the fact that we were learning, but there was no homework.**”*

*“I had such a great time and learned many new techniques. **I was actually excited to go to school.** The teachers were very helpful and made sure that the course was fun and organized. I am more open to trying new things and challenging myself.”*

*“**I didn’t have any stress or competition...**this course worked to improve my mental health instead of giving me things that made my life more difficult.”*

Students (Qualitative)

Theme: Students enjoyed the change from the traditional structure of school:

“It didn’t feel like the normal day. I didn’t really care that the bells were off and didn’t depend on that schedule.”

Theme: Students enjoyed having more self-direction than in their normal school experience:

“We had a lot more freedom and were able to make our own decisions and have a project that was truly our own - we had no rubrics or guidelines, however we all produced beautiful things with obvious effort.”

Students (Qualitative)

Theme: Students showed a preference for courses that included offsite travel:

*“The only day we were really in the classroom was the first day, all the other days were in Boston or down the Cape or hiking. It was awesome, **I got to meet new people and explore places I've never been while still learning** about my course.”*

Theme: Students experienced the end of the school year prior to J-Term (end of Term 4, final exams) as more stressful than in previous years:

*“**The time leading up to J-Term was tough** because teachers had to provide a ton of information because they had 5 less days in the year than normal.”*

Theme: Students wanted to learn more about what was happening in other J-Term courses:

*“I think it would be cool to see what other courses were doing or at least have an idea. **Each course felt very isolated.**”*

Students (Qualitative)

Theme: Students were able to articulate specific learning outcomes for themselves:

*“I will take away the fact that even if you seem very different than someone, there is always something to connect with, if you just open up. **Not everyone is as different as they seem.**”* -The Stories that Connect Us

*“I found J-Term to be a really great learning experience, not just about animation and using new software, but also working with time constraints and technical difficulties...You always listened to my input and **helped me get through the most frustrating and painstaking parts of the creation process.**”* -Art of the Moving Title

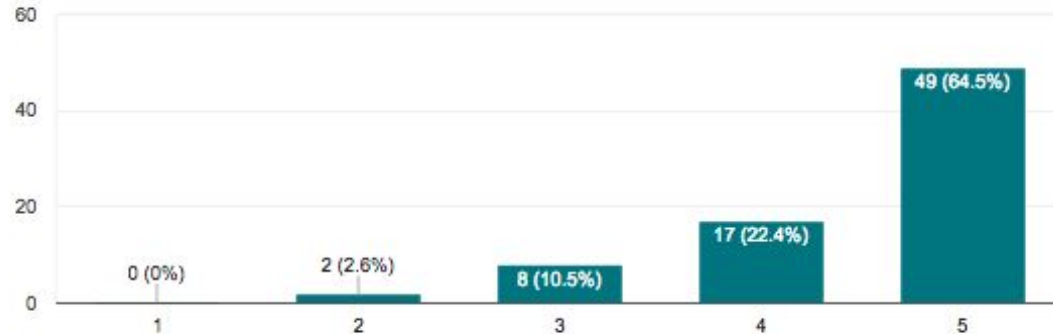
*“This course was a community experience with a really nice group of people who could all be happy together. **I had a really good time meditating and doing yoga which are things I'm planning to integrate into my school year so I can have more energy and improve my psyche.**”* -The Pursuit of Happiness

*“[This experience] was extremely memorable in the way that I was able to connect with people I normally wouldn't, as well as have an adventure of a lifetime. I took away that even **when things get really difficult, you can figure it out by taking a step back, staying calm, and having a positive attitude.**”* - Summit New England Peaks

Teachers (Quantitative)

J-term's mission was to provide an opportunity for students to dive deeply into an existing area of interest or explore a new interest. J-Term courses were intended to be challenging and experiential; to involve, not just inform. The goal was for students to explore, create, study, think and do. Based on your experience in your course, how successful was J-term in achieving its mission?

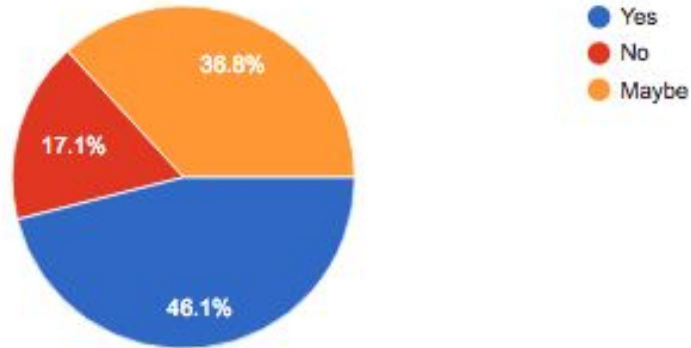
76 responses



Teachers (Quantitative)

Do you believe your experiences developing and teaching your J-Term course will have any effect on your overall teaching practice going forward?

76 responses



Teachers (Qualitative)

Theme: Teachers experienced high levels of student motivation without the use of grades:

*“The students really impressed me with **how genuinely interested they were in the course subject matter without any external motivator**. Students were **HIGHLY** engaged, but this engagement came from a combination of internal motivation, curiosity, and peer encouragement.”*

*“**J-Term was learning in its purest form**. Students were excited to come to school and would say things like, ‘I’m having so much fun!’ or ‘I’m learning without worrying about the grade!’”*

*“**My expectations of how hard the kids would work and how invested they would be were FAR exceeded**. The kids worked hard and had great attitudes all week.”*

Teachers (Qualitative)

Theme: Many teachers noted that the structure of J-Term allowed them to develop more meaningful relationships with students:

“J-Term offered new perspective on students’ experiences. We developed a strong bond in our course, extraordinarily strong for the 1 week duration of the course.

***Students reported appreciating the social/emotional aspects of the course** -- the chance to check-in, offer feedback, debrief activities, etc. and shared a desire for more of this within the fast-paced schedule of the typical academic day.”*

*“I met a lot of students I would not have met otherwise. **I got to see other aspects of current students’ personalities** that I hadn’t see all year.”*

Teachers (Qualitative)

Theme: Many teachers made connections about how J-Term might impact their thinking about their traditional course instruction:

*“I think I will be less afraid to work through ‘uncomfortable’ moments (silence). I learned **one of the things that students value really highly is how much their teachers care about them** and that they can visibly see that their teachers enjoy what they are doing. I learned that not everyone will connect with every activity/experience and that is okay as long as you offer variety.”*

*“Seeing the joyfulness of our learners reminded me that **kids are innately interested in engaging material**, and we have to figure out the best way to do that.”*

*“I’m thinking a lot more about **classroom community** and its role in student buy-in.”*

*“We need to find ways to **involve students much more in the learning process** rather than just deliver content. J-Term was fertile ground for this type of instruction.”*

*“[This experience] **allowed me to become a bit more flexible in my planning**. I had things planned for the week, but based on student input and excitement, there were times when we pivoted in an unplanned direction.”*

*“I think it **got me to think about the pressures students put on themselves** to perform and do well. I knew it was always there, but I did not know the extent.”*

Teachers (Qualitative)

Theme: Similar to students, many teachers experienced increased stress in the days leading up to J-Term (end of 4th Term and final exams):

*“The **students and staff had visibly increased anxiety at the end of the school year** compared to previous years. This was, in part, due to curriculum from the classroom being condensed into a shorter amount of time. More assessments and projects were crammed into a smaller window on the calendar, thus increasing stress.”*

Theme: Co-Teaching was a positive and new experience:

*“I completely enjoyed the experience of working so closely with colleagues that I previously had not known well. They are great, smart, accountable, tough, and caring people! **It makes me want to reach out to collaborate more.**”*

*“I have never co-taught before, and I found that experience both valuable and affirming. Just **seeing how someone else plans and operates has given me some ideas that I will put to use in my own classes** in the fall. Having a trusted colleague at your side emboldens you to do things you might not have thought possible in the classroom.”*

Parent Feedback

*“My daughter came home yesterday from her Spanish immersion class and was just so excited to talk about her day. She kept saying how awesome and nice the teachers are and how she understands much more Spanish than she thought she would. What is better than a confidence boost to a 16-year-old girl?...**It’s the end of June and students are still excited to be learning.**”*

*“[My daughter] came home utterly exhausted, but beaming. She said - and I quote - ‘This was one of the best weeks of my life - incredibly rewarding!’ I asked her what her biggest takeaway was and she said **it really showed her to try new experiences, even if they feel a bit frightening.**”*

Parent Feedback

*“I cannot imagine how much planning, coordination, communication, and angst goes into making something like this happen....If you are wondering if it was all worth it, **have no doubt, it was worth every bit of it.**”*

*“Quick note to thank the WHS faculty and staff for the awesome vision, planning, and work to make J-Term a terrific success...I have really enjoyed looking at the Instagram photos -- seeing all the ways **kids are learning and engaging with the resources around them**...Very jealous that no such opportunity existed for me back in the day.”*

5 Days of J-Term....Impact on the Other 175 Days

Teachers:

- Lessons of Student Engagement
 - Changing attitudes around student motivation
 - Increased use of Self-Directed and/or Student-Centered Learning
- Enhanced Culture of Professional Collaboration
 - Practice Offering and Receiving Peer Feedback
 - Benefits of Peer Observation / Co-Teaching
- Experience of Curriculum Development
 - Enhancing creative thinking
 - Use of essential questions
 - Varied methods of instruction
- Added Emphasis on Student Relationships
 - Social-Emotional Learning

5 Days of J-Term....Impact on the Other 175 Days

Students:

- Detachment of Learning Experiences from Grades
- Increased Interaction with Other Students
- Positive Affiliations with School and Learning
- Confidence and Increased Ability to Self-Direct Learning
- Improvements in Social-Emotional Skills
- Shifted Relationships with Teachers

Looking Forward

J-Term 2019



Continued Progress this Year

- Summer 2018: Three meetings of Steering Committee Subgroups
 - Review Student Qualitative Feedback
 - Generate “J-Term Summary Document”
 - Establish Initial Plan for Creation of New Courses and Distribution of New Teachers
- September 28: Meeting with Concord-Carlisle (Q5 Pilot)
- October 10: Faculty PD Session
 - Consolidating Takeaways about Teaching & Learning from J-Term 2018
 - Course Ideation and Teaming Process for New Courses & New Teams for 2019
- October 12: Application filed for Grant from Massachusetts Cultural Council
- October 15: Steering Committee Meeting
 - Review of New Course Proposals
- October 16 - November 2: Feedback Meetings
 - Steering Committee Members Meet with Teaching Teams for New Courses

Courses Not Running in 2019

A Deep Dive into Anime and Fan Theory

A Foodie's Guide to Boston

Bon Appétit: French Immersion Week

CSI Westwood

DeMOCKracy

Destination Aviation

Exploring Scientific Discovery & Truth

Society through Sports on Screen

The Criminal Mind

Proposed New Courses for 2019

A Muggle's Look into the Magical World

Activating your Inner Activist

Crazy Rich Asians! & Other Film Studies

From Jazz to Hip Hop: Black Music in America

History of Video Games: From Pong to VR

Introduction to Agriculture

iTerm: Making J-Term Documentaries

Outdoor Excursions

Teenagers in TV and Film

Urban Walking: Discovering Boston's Neighborhoods One Step at a Time

Weightlifting and Nutrition 101

Lessons Learned: Changes for J-Term 2019

- Less “rushed” end to Term 4 and Final Exams
 - Changes to Overall Term Calendar
 - Major Assignments staggered with earlier due dates
- Added opportunities for interaction between courses
- Restructuring of courses that lacked enough variety in daily structure
- Administrative changes to logistical processes
 - Equipment ordering and distribution
 - Course change process

Next Steps

- November 8-9: Student Focus Groups
 - Collect qualitative and quantitative feedback on proposed new courses
 - Feedback to be later shared with teaching teams
- Late November: J-Term Website Updated with New Courses
- December 17: J-Term Shopping
 - Slx 10-minute sessions (1 day)
- December 18-21: J-Term Course Registration
- Late January, 2019: Students Notified of Course Placement
- June 11-17*: J-Term 2019
 - *dates subject to snow days