



SURVEY OF TEACHER INSTITUTE PARTICIPANTS, 2004–08
Executive Summary
October 7, 2008

Since 2004, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities' *We the People* initiative, Humanities Texas has partnered with the state's leading universities and cultural organizations to hold residential summer institutes supporting Texas teachers' intellectual and professional development. These institutes offer teachers the opportunity to work closely with leading humanities scholars, exploring topics at the heart of the state's humanities curricula.

Immediately following each institute, participating teachers completed a summative program evaluation and made suggestions for the future. In August 2008, Humanities Texas conducted the first comprehensive survey of *all* 298 teachers who had participated in these programs since 2004. This new survey sought to determine what long-term influence the institutes have had upon 1.) teachers' professional development and practice, and 2.) their students' learning. The survey also asked teachers about institute logistics so Humanities Texas can determine how best to apportion resources when planning future programs.

The results of this comprehensive survey are presented here. Each teacher received a hard copy of the survey through the U.S. mail; teachers were also contacted via email and offered the opportunity to complete the survey online. Teachers' anonymous survey responses were collected and tabulated by Elizabeth Hannah, M.B.A.

SURVEY RESULTS

I. Overall impact

The 171 (57%) teachers who responded to the survey were overwhelmingly positive about the role that their institute experience had played in their professional development. 93% reported that it had improved their knowledge of the subjects that they teach. 87% said it had enhanced their ability to prepare their students to meet state academic standards. And 92% responded that it will have a lasting and positive effect on their teaching.

The teachers' comments in the survey confirmed their enthusiasm. Indeed, many respondents described their institute experience as the most positive and meaningful professional development program of their career. The institute was "the very best I have attended & I have attended MANY over the years," wrote one seasoned teacher. "The topics and presenters were extraordinary!" responded another. One teacher described the institute s/he attended as "intensive and wonderfully planned in all aspects. It immersed us in the material." Another wrote that the institute that s/he attended was "light years better than anything offered by the district!" A teacher who attended the "From Disunion to Empire" institute at the University of North Texas described the faculty as "an all star cast of professors on the front line of the subjects covered. I felt like a kid at a fantasy camp." Another teacher summarized his or her experience thus: "This institute was incredible. I wish it were available for more teachers. I would love to apply again but I feel guilty in that I might be depriving other teachers of the experience."

II. Impact on teachers' professional practice

The survey indicates that the Humanities Texas institutes had broad influence upon teachers' course offerings and curriculum design; their instructional methods; the resources and materials they use in the classroom; and their subsequent efforts at professional development.

Course offerings

39% of the respondents reported that they changed their course offerings as a result of their participation in an institute. One teacher reported having started “a program for high school G/T [gifted and talented] students much of which is based on results of the institute.” Another created a “social social studies academy where I have included information from the institute.”

Curriculum design

81% of respondents changed their curricular objectives, and 95% changed their curricular content, with more than half noting that they had made either significant or extensive changes. A teacher who attended the 2005 institute in Galveston reported that s/he “used materials and ideas from the institute to revise my unit on immigration,” then shared the unit both at the Texas Council for the Social Studies annual meeting and at the Region VI Texas History Conference.

Teaching practices

A large majority of the teachers made changes to their instructional methods (92%), student assignments (91%), and assessment techniques (67%) as a result of their institute experience. In their comments, a large majority of teachers emphasized that the institute enabled them to expand the role that the examination of primary sources (e.g., historical documents, photographs, and maps) plays in their teaching.

Instructional materials and resources

While a minority of teachers (32%) changed textbooks as a result of the training they received at the institute, an overwhelming number enhanced their curricula with the addition of primary sources (86%), supplemental readings (87%), and additional instructional media (84%). Nearly three quarters of the teachers reported that the institute encouraged them to increase their use of museums, libraries, historical sites, and other local resources in their courses.

Professional development of participants and their colleagues

The survey revealed that the institutes have influenced a number of teachers' subsequent professional development efforts. 22% reported that their institute experience had encouraged them to apply for fellowships, scholarships, and/or grants. 16% noted that the institute had played a role in their professional promotion. 11% credited their institute experience with encouraging them to enroll in a graduate program.

The survey findings also confirm that the benefit of these institutes stretches beyond the participating teachers and their students. 93% of the respondents reported that they had shared the training and resources they had received at the institute, with 82% reporting that they had done so a “significant” or “extensive” amount.

In one of the survey's potentially most significant findings, 40% of the respondents noted that their institute experience had influenced their decision to continue teaching.

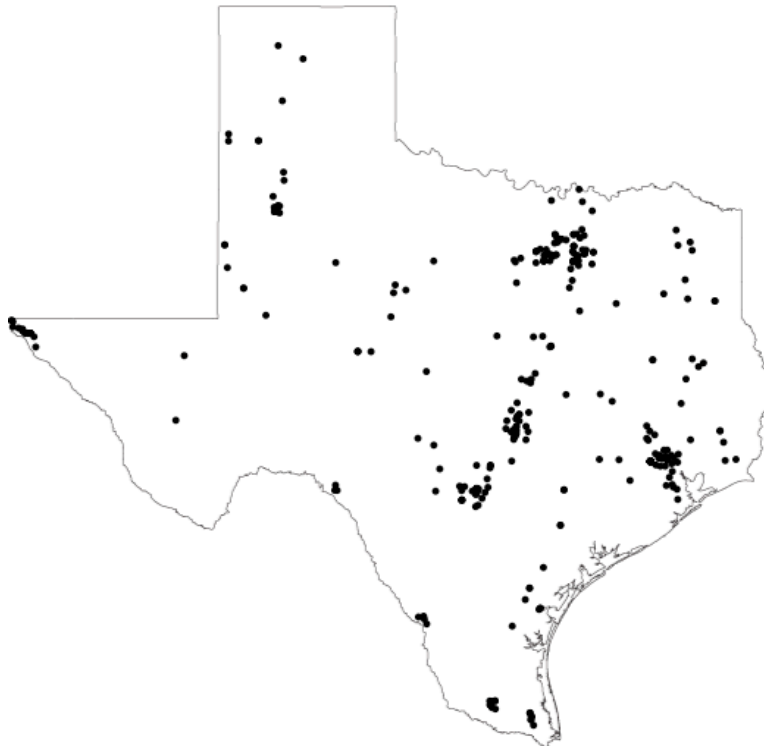
III. Impact on students

Teachers reported that as they implemented what they learned at the institutes, their students' level of engagement and achievement improved. (On average, 77% reported an increase in student engagement, 71% an increase in student achievement, and 73% an improvement in classroom tone.) A number of teachers emphasized that the institutes' emphasis on the use and interpretation of primary sources had an especially meaningful impact on their students' education. One respondent wrote that his or her courses now "foster more direct student involvement and more autonomous learning." Other teachers noted that their increased mastery of, and enthusiasm for, their subjects had a direct impact on their students. As one teacher explained, "I was a more enthusiastic teacher and in turn my students were more enthusiastic about the content."

IV. Planning future institutes

Roughly 40% of the teachers indicated that the stipend and travel reimbursement were significant in their decision to attend the institute. In their comments, a number of teachers emphasized that without these funds, they would not have been able to attend. When asked to compare the importance of the stipend with the quality of the institute lodging, teachers overwhelmingly indicated that the amount of the stipend was more important.

86.5% of the respondents were significantly or highly interested in attending one-day institutes in Austin during the school year, provided that Humanities Texas provided travel reimbursements. Teachers in regions further from Austin (e.g., the Panhandle, West Texas) were just as likely to indicate interest as teachers in the central part of the state. While teachers preferred that such institutes be scheduled on Saturdays during the school year, many would also be willing to attend on in-service days.



*Geographical
distribution of
teachers attending
Humanities Texas
teacher institutes,
2004–08*

V. Themes emerging from teachers' comments

Reviewing the teachers' comments, several other themes emerge that shed light upon the institutes' unique strengths as teacher professional development programs.

First, teachers emphasized that the institutes provided them with essential training in the subjects that they teach. "The institute significantly raised my knowledge base in American and Texas history," wrote one. Many respondents explained that the institute allowed them to enhance and deepen their curricula. "I have updated and gone more in depth with my lesson plans for both regular classes and AP classes based on information I obtained from Denton," noted one. "I brought much more primary research to my class as a result of the institute," wrote another. Several teachers noted that the institute helped prepare them to teach subjects in which they had limited training—a situation increasingly common in Texas schools. "I now teach Texas History, but only for the first time this year," wrote one teacher. "I definitely feel more prepared for the subject due to the institute."

Second, teachers emphasized that most of the professional development opportunities available to them focus on classroom management strategies. They long for programs such as the ones offered by Humanities Texas, which not only provide intensive, content-specific training, but also help them rediscover the passion for learning that led them to teaching in the first place. "It was great to work with people that love history as much as I do," noted one. Another said that the institute "was like going back to a great college classroom learning experience!" Many teachers emphasized that the programs were immensely invigorating and that they passed their new enthusiasm on to their students. "I felt like I was back in college and was inspired to work even harder to pass that love of history on to my kids," wrote one. Another explained, "I learned so much! That was carried over into my classroom and helped me to teach with more enthusiasm." Such comments indicate why 40% of the respondents felt that the institute had positively influenced their decision to continue teaching; the programs are as personally meaningful as they are professionally significant.

Finally, a central strength of the institutes is their ability to introduce teachers to intellectual resources they had not previously encountered. Wrote one respondent, "The institute showed me where to locate a wealth of resources so that I can integrate even more hands-on activities for my students!" Many teachers noted that they don't have the time to locate and gather the resources and scholarship that the institutes provide. And they appreciated meeting and working with representatives from the state's libraries, archives, and museums. By developing personal contacts at those institutions, the teachers felt that they could more effectively draw upon the institutions' resources in the future.

CONCLUSION

Humanities Texas finds these results extremely encouraging. The survey clearly indicates that the teachers who participated in its institutes over the past five years feel that the programs have had an important, long-term positive effect on their teaching and professional development, as well as their students' learning experience. The uniformly high ratings provide compelling evidence for the program's effectiveness and importance; the teachers' comments offer specific insight into the program's unique strengths. Humanities Texas looks forward to serving even more Texas teachers in the future by expanding the number and topical range of its teacher institutes while maintaining their high quality.



SURVEY OF TEACHER INSTITUTE PARTICIPANTS, 2004–08 Summary of Responses

In August 2008, Humanities Texas conducted a survey of the 298 teachers who attended the eight summer teacher institutes the council had held since 2004. Teachers received a hard copy of the survey through the U.S. mail; they were also contacted via email and offered the opportunity to complete the survey online. 171 teachers completed the survey; their anonymous responses, which were collected and tabulated by Elizabeth Hannah, M.B.A, are summarized here.

1. Please begin by indicating which Humanities Texas teacher institute(s) you attended. Check ALL that apply.

11.1%	Institute on Congress and American History (Austin 2004)
11.7%	Gateway on the Gulf (Galveston 2005)
8.8%	Southwest Vistas (Houston 2006)
13.5%	Southwest Vistas (El Paso 2006)
11.7%	The West and the Shaping of America (Fort Worth 2007)
13.5%	The West and the Shaping of America (Lubbock 2007)
21.6%	From Disunion to Empire (Denton 2008)
19.3%	From Disunion to Empire (San Antonio 2008)

2. Indicate the number of years you have been a teacher.

19.3%	One to five
21.6%	Six to ten
28.1%	Eleven to twenty
21.1%	Twenty-one to thirty
9.9%	Thirty-one and beyond

3. Indicate the grade level(s) that you currently teach. Please check ALL that apply.

12.3%	Elementary
84.8%	Secondary
7.6%	Post-secondary
5.3%	Other

4. Indicate the subject area(s) that you currently teach. Please check ALL that apply.

89.5%	Social studies
17.5%	Language arts
2.9%	Arts
1.8%	Foreign languages
9.9%	Other

5. In which Educational Service Center Region is your current school located?

7.6%	Region 1	<1%	Region 8	3.5%	Region 15
2.9%	Region 2	0.0%	Region 9	1.8%	Region 16
2.3%	Region 3	15.2%	Region 10	4.1%	Region 17
15.8%	Region 4	7.0%	Region 11	1.8%	Region 18
2.9%	Region 5	5.3%	Region 12	7.0%	Region 19
2.9%	Region 6	7.0%	Region 13	8.8%	Region 20
<1%	Region 7	2.3%	Region 14		

CURRICULUM DESIGN AND TEACHING PRACTICE

Questions 6-11 relate specifically to the influence that the institute has played in shaping your course offerings, curriculum design, and teaching practices.

6. Indicate the extent to which you changed your course offerings and/or curricular objectives and content as a direct result of the institute.

	No change	Some change	Significant change	Extensive change
Course offerings	53.2%	23.4%	11.7%	3.5%
Curricular objectives	19.3%	47.4%	21.1%	2.3%
Curricular content	5.3%	37.4%	43.3%	7.0%

7. If any changes occurred in your course offerings and/or curricular goals and content, assess the effect of those changes on the following student characteristics.

	No change	Some change	Significant change	Extensive change
Student engagement	8.2%	31.6%	42.1%	4.1%
Student achievement	10.5%	39.8%	31.0%	1.2%
Classroom tone	8.8%	32.2%	36.3%	7.0%

8. Indicate the extent to which you changed the following teaching practices as a result of the institute.

	No change	Some change	Significant change	Extensive change
Instructional methods	8.2%	50.9%	29.8%	4.1%
Student assignments	8.8%	45.0%	38.0%	1.8%
Assessment techniques	22.2%	46.8%	19.9%	1.8%

9. If any changes occurred in your teaching practices, assess the effect of those changes on the following student characteristics.

	No change	Some change	Significant change	Extensive change
Student engagement	7.0%	35.7%	38.0%	1.8%
Student achievement	11.1%	43.9%	23.4%	2.3%
Classroom tone	8.8%	39.8%	26.3%	4.1%

10. Indicate the level of change that has occurred in your choice of instructional materials and resources as a result of the institute.

	No change	Some change	Significant change	Extensive change
Textbooks	56.1%	20.5%	10.5%	1.2%
Primary sources	6.4%	31.0%	39.8%	15.2%
Supplemental readings (print and online)	5.8%	35.7%	39.2%	11.7%
Other supplementary materials (e.g., films, videos)	9.4%	40.4%	34.5%	8.8%
Use of museums, libraries, historical sites, and other local resources	17.5%	40.9%	22.2%	11.7%

11. If any changes occurred with respect to your choice of instructional materials and resources, assess the effect of those changes on the following student characteristics.

	No change	Some change	Significant change	Extensive change
Student engagement	7.6%	37.4%	36.8%	2.3%
Student achievement	11.1%	44.4%	24.6%	2.9%
Classroom tone	10.5%	37.4%	30.4%	5.3%

PROFESSIONAL OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOPMENT

Questions 12–16 relate specifically to the role the institute has played in your subsequent professional development.

12. Circle one: My institute experience improved my knowledge of the academic subjects I teach.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.2%	1.2%	38.6%	54.4%

13. Circle one: My institute experience increased my ability to prepare students to meet state academic standards.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.2%	5.8%	54.4%	32.7%

14. Circle one: My institute experience has had or is likely to have a positive and lasting impact on my classroom instruction.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1.2%	1.8%	36.8%	55.6%

15. Check ALL of the areas that have been influenced by your institute experience.

69.6%	Participation in other curriculum development and/or teacher training programs
21.6%	Application for or receipt of fellowships, scholarships, and/or grants
15.8%	Professional promotion
10.5%	Enrollment in a graduate program
43.9%	Application to attend subsequent Humanities Texas teacher institutes
21.6%	Application to attend National Endowment for the Humanities teacher institutes
40.4%	Decision to continue teaching
11.1%	Other (specify)

16. Indicate the extent to which you have shared with your colleagues the training and resources you received at the institute.

Not at all	Some	A significant amount	An extensive amount
1.8%	38.0%	43.9%	11.1%

INSTITUTE CHARACTERISTICS

17. In comparison to other professional development programs you have attended, how professionally useful was this institute?

Not useful	Marginally useful	Significantly useful	Highly useful
1.2%	5.3%	46.8%	42.7%

18. In comparison to other professional development programs you have attended, how intellectually rigorous was this institute?

Not rigorous	Marginally rigorous	Significantly rigorous	Highly rigorous
2.3%	9.9%	42.7%	41.5%

19. In comparison to other professional development programs you have attended, how personally rewarding was this institute?

Not rewarding	Marginally rewarding	Significantly rewarding	Highly rewarding
0.6%	3.5%	31.0%	60.8%

20. How important was the stipend in your decision to attend the institute?

Not important	Marginally important	Significantly important	Highly important
14.0%	42.7%	25.7%	13.5%

21. If you received a travel reimbursement, how important was it in your decision to attend the institute?

Not important	Marginally important	Significantly important	Highly important
15.2%	29.2%	27.5%	16.4%

22. Please rank the following program components in order of their importance to you when attending a residential teacher institute, with 1 as the MOST significant and 3 as the LEAST significant.

Rank			
1	2	3	
44.4%	18.7%	31.6%	The amount of the stipend paid for participation
23.4%	52.0%	18.7%	The quality of the institute lodging
26.9%	22.2%	45.0%	Whether you have a single room

23. Assuming you would receive a travel reimbursement, how interested would you be in participating in a one-day institute in Austin that further explores topics addressed in the institute you attended?

Not interested	Marginally interested	Significantly interested	Highly interested
2.3%	6.4%	22.2%	64.3%

24. If you indicated that you would be interested, when you would be able to attend such an institute? Please check ALL that apply.

66.1%	A Saturday during the school year
33.3%	A holiday during the school year (e.g., spring break)
48.5%	An in-service day during the school year
84.8%	During the summer
8.2%	Other (specify):