

UH Hilo Survey 1 Results for AY 2011-2012

Fall 2011

106 surveys were collected from 10 sections of English 100 and 100T at UH Hilo. As with the previous year, response rates among classes were inconsistent. Some sections showed almost 100% compliance whereas others had less than 50%. The inconsistencies do appear to correlate to teachers themselves, suggesting some faculty may not be successfully communicating the importance of the survey to students.

Data was also collected on ethnicity, type of secondary institution (Hawai'i public and private, other Hawai'i public and private, and out-of-state), and status at time of survey (first-time freshmen versus upper classmen).

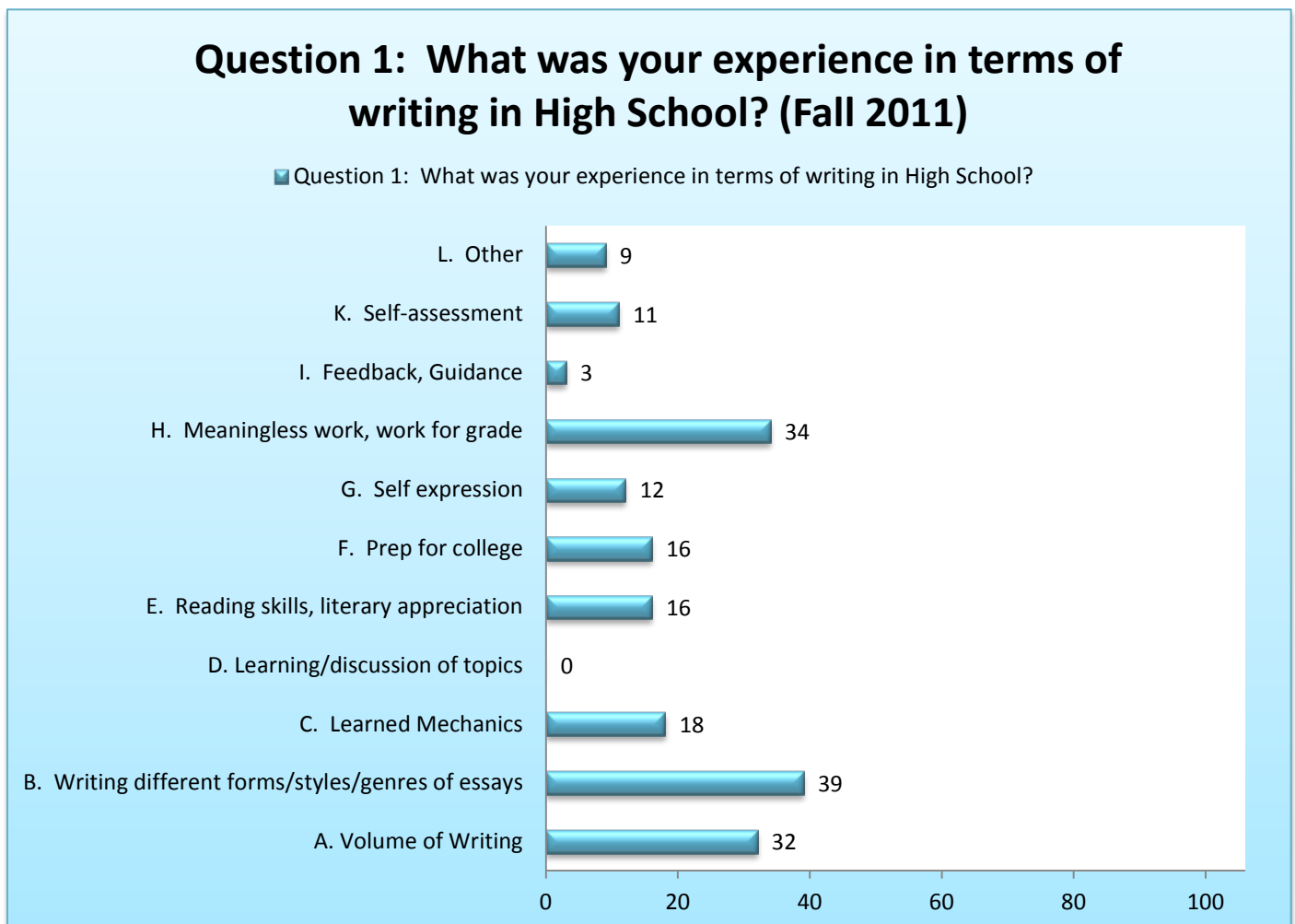
Of the 106, 58 (54.7%) were Hawai'i public school graduates (36 from the Big Island DOE, 3 from Big Island Public Charter Schools, and 19 from other Island DOE schools); 19 (17.9%) from private institutions (8 from the Big Island and 11 from the other Islands); 22 (20.7%) from mainland American schools; and surprisingly, 5 students from the following locales: China, Guam, Kwajalein, Saipan, and American Samoa. (1 student did not answer the demographic profile on the last page of the survey).

Of the total population, 22 indicated they were of Native Hawaiian ancestry (20.7%).

Because Big Island students represent the largest majority of the sample, it was decided that answers would be aggregated as Big Island DOE and Big Island Private, which were weighed against Other DOE, Other Private, and Mainland Students.

Raw Scores for UH Hilo

QUESTION 1: What was your experience in terms of writing in High School?



Unlike the Fall 2010 students, the Fall 2011 cohort identified A (Volume of writing), B (Writing different forms/styles/genres of essays) and H (Meaningless work) as equally common experiences of their high school curriculum. A sampling of answers is given below:

A. Volume of writing, practiced writing (a lot), writing to write/improve

- “In high school they require taking English every year, so over time I did quite a bit of writing. Surprisingly though I did not write too many essays. If I did I felt I had a lot of time, especially by having like rough drafts due or certain due dates for different things. I feel like college [sic] you don’t have the same strictness.” (Anglo-American student, California)
- “I did a lot of journal writing, review and assessments, a little poetry, and a lot of essays.” (Asian-American student, Public Institution—Big Island)

B. Writing different forms/styles/genres of essays

- “I had an english [sic] class every year. I learned to write poems and essays.” (Native Hawaiian student, Private Institution—Big Island)
- “Science Fair Essays. English Essays.” (Asian American student, Private Institution—O’ahu)
- “My experience in terms of writing in high school compared to college is that in high school the only thing they taught us to do is how to write a constructed response and how to cite internet sources well that what I learned from my English teacher through [sic] my 4 years. We also learned vocabulary words, poems, canterbury [sic] tales, Beowulf, and many more. (Cruz [sic] English class), watch movies. (Asian-American student, Public Institution—Maui)
- “Some research papers, mostly philosophical analysis (humanities buff) and some literary analysis.” (Anglo-American student, Washington State)

H. Meaningless work, work for grade

- “I honestly feel I am a better speaker than I am a writer [sic]. In high school my senior year we didn’t do to [sic] many writing assignments, we did more our Junior year. I feel I need more practice.” (Native Hawaiian student, Public Institution—O’ahu)
- “My high school writing experience failed me. It didn’t help me at all. I learned nothing and didn’t gain anything.” (Native Hawaiian student, Public Institution—O’ahu)
- “My experience in terms of writing in High School was ‘easy’ for me because I didn’t have to write a lot compared to college. I took the basic English class and I don’t remember learning anything when it comes to writing.” (Asian-American student, Public Institution—Big Island)
- “I didn’t really learn much.” (Hispanic student, Public Charter Institution—Big Island)
- “We never wrote anything except for 2 papers a year. My english [sic] teachers didn’t know what they were doing.” (Anglo-American student, California)
- “My writing experience in high school was very vague. Only two of my four english [sic] teachers taught me anything on the subject. It felt as if the levels of english [sic] was dumbed down in order for teachers to present good grades.” (Hispanic student, California)

The percentile differentiation between these groups is even more telling:

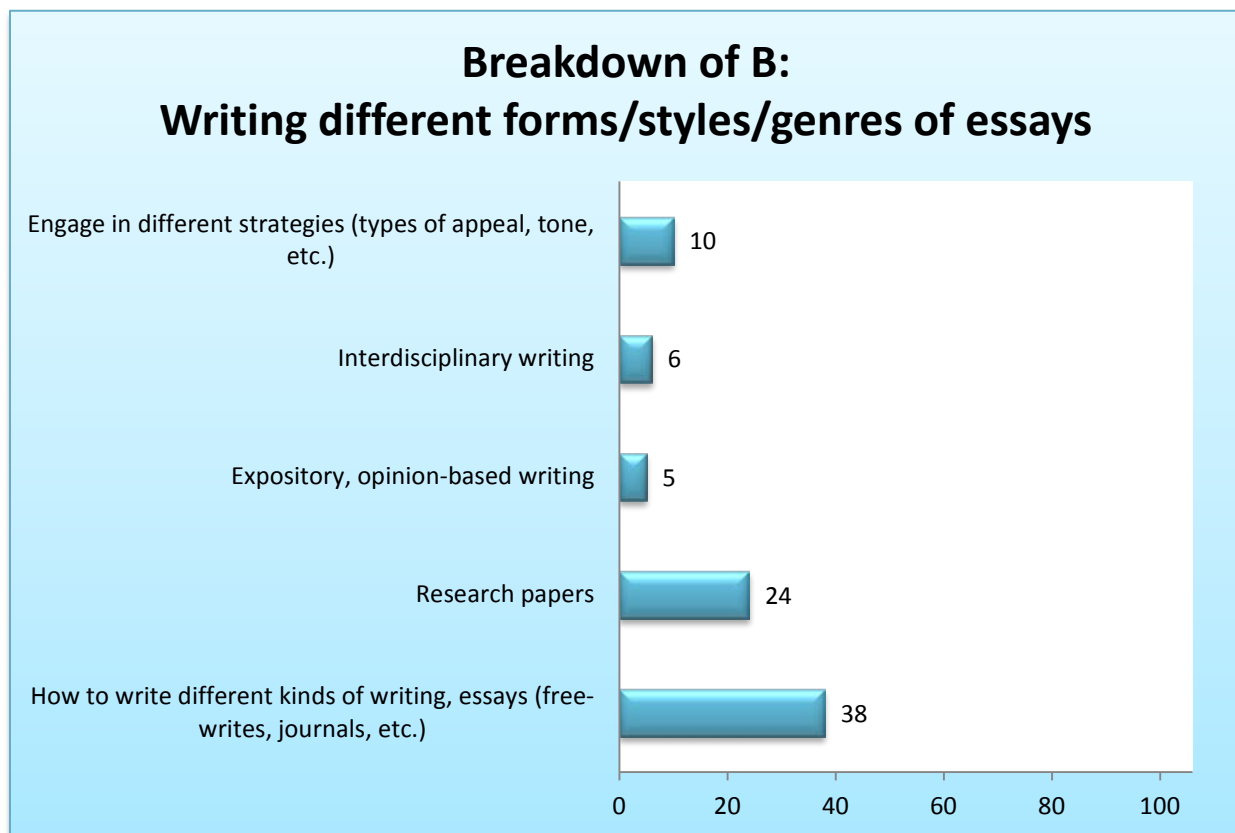
	Big Island DOE (39)	Other DOE (19)	Big Island Private (8)	Other Private (11)	Mainland (22)
A. Volume of writing, practices writing, writing to improve	15 38.4%	4 18.1%	1 *	4 *	8 27.2%
B. Writing different forms/styles/genres of essays	14 35.8%	5 22.7%	3 *	5 *	9 40.9%
H. Meaningless (busy) work, work for grade, to fulfill a requirement	14 35.8%	11 50%	3 *	1 *	6 27.2%

* Indicates size of population is statistically too small to calculate percentile difference.

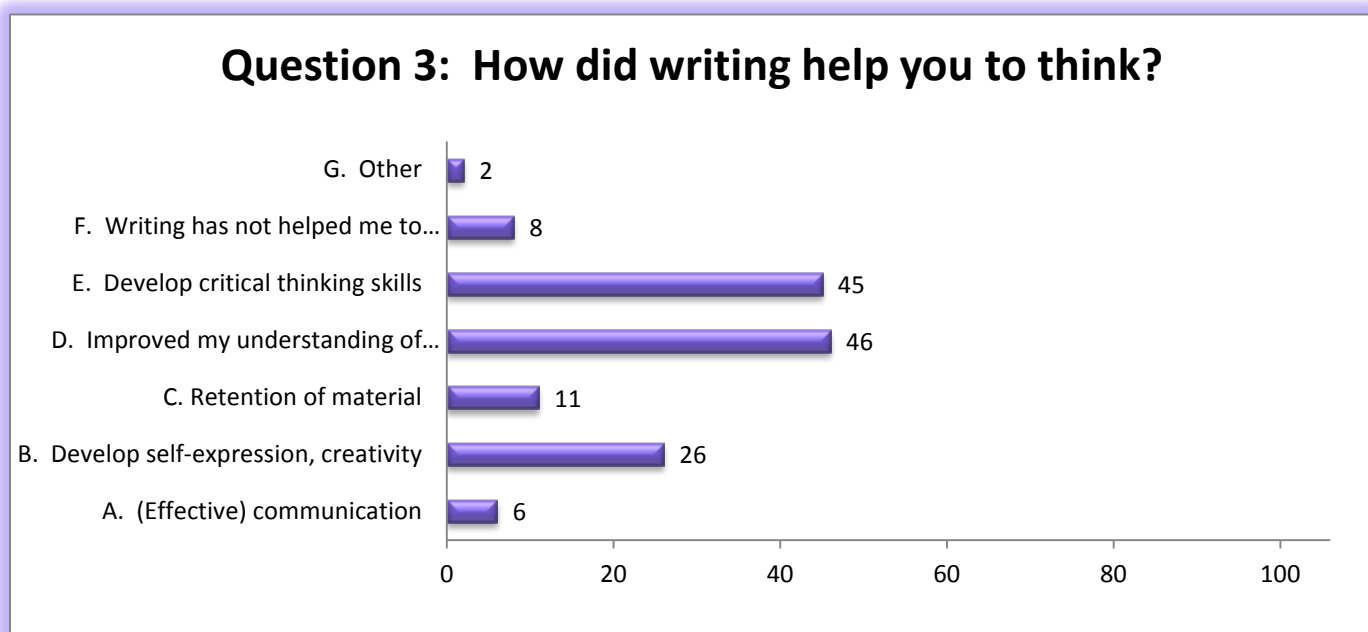
Half of the entire body of students coming from public schools from the other islands as well as more than third of all Big Island students (including 3 of 8 Big Island private school graduates) indicated

problems with the writing curriculum they experienced; this suggests there is a pervasive problem within the larger Big Island community, as reflected in the comments above. However, mainland students also expressed similar sentiments, which show that there is a national problem in communicating the value of writing to High School attendees. What is more troubling is the large numbers of responders who utilized grammatically incorrect prose to express concerns that they learned very little in the way of writing instruction.

Like the previous academic year, the overall population indicated little experience with research; only 24 respondents in this group identified research as part of their writing in High School. The more popular forms of writing seem are the timed free-write that is done in response to a chosen topic and the daily journal.



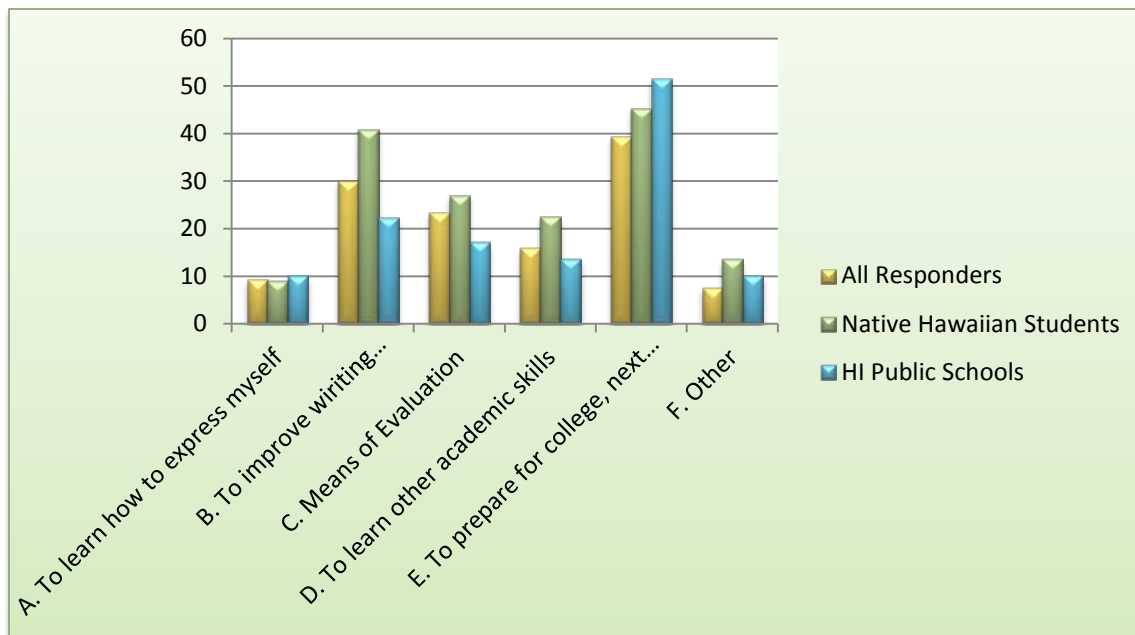
Again, like the previous academic year, students intuitively answered that writing could be seen as a form of critical thinking; however, given the rather negative perceptions towards writing in the other questions, this study cannot exclude the possibility that the way this particular question is worded may be biasing students by prompting them to explore and contemplate writing in a manner previously unknown to them.



What was noticeable in this batch of responses from Fall 2011 is the percentile differentiation for students reporting on their perceptions on the “purpose” of writing:

Percentile Differentiation for UH Hilo
(General population versus HI State Public School Graduates versus Native Hawaiian Responders)

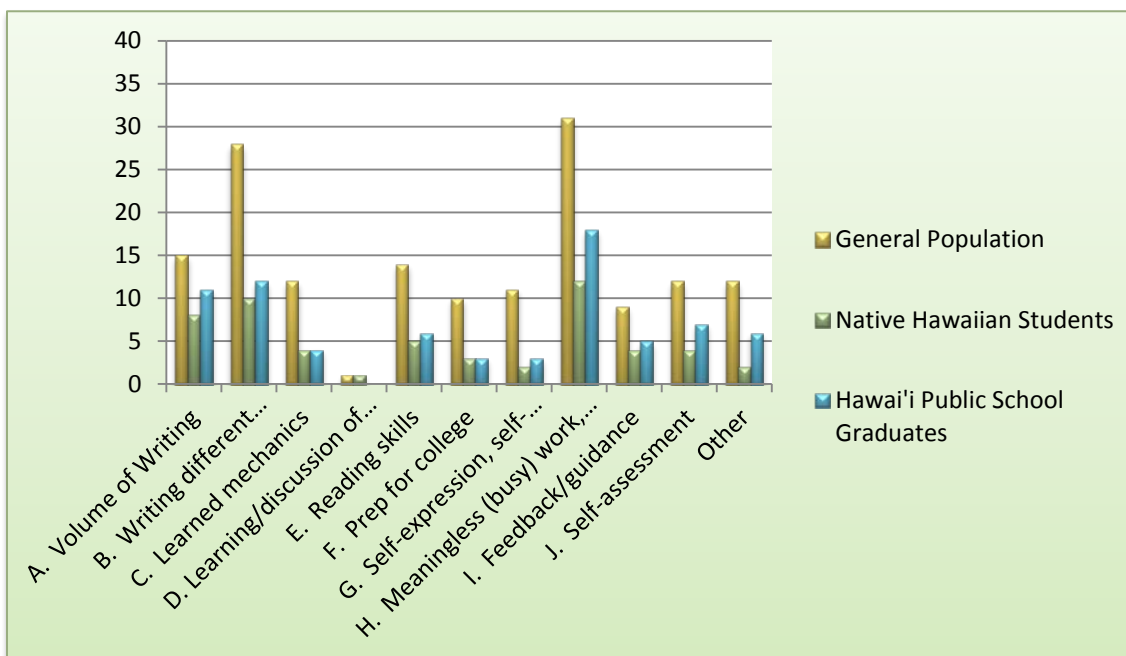
QUESTION 4: In your opinion, what was the purpose of writing?



This suggests a need to further track responses by origins and ethnicities as there does seem to be some distinct differences in the way Native Hawaiian students view their past work as opposed to the larger population of public school graduates. As the sample size was rather small (just 22 of the 106 identified themselves as indigenous Hawaiians), it is hard to validate this trend without further data.

Spring 2011

103 surveys were collected in Spring of 2012 from both ENG 100 and ENG 100T courses. Of the 103, 53 (or 51.4%) identified themselves as having graduated from an established DOE High School. Charter school and private school graduates were not counted at this time. Following the same model from the previous year, data on ethnicities and type of secondary institution (i.e. local public, local private, etc.) was again collected. This time, data was also collected to discern academic attitudes among Native Hawaiian students (who constituted 34.9% of the total body of respondents), per our new Strategic Plan (2011-2015), which states: “We continue to embrace our responsibility to serve students of Native Hawaiian ancestry and to support the UH system’s goal to significantly increase the number of Native Hawaiian graduates. We expect to continue exceeding the targets set for UH Hilo in this regard” (p. 3).



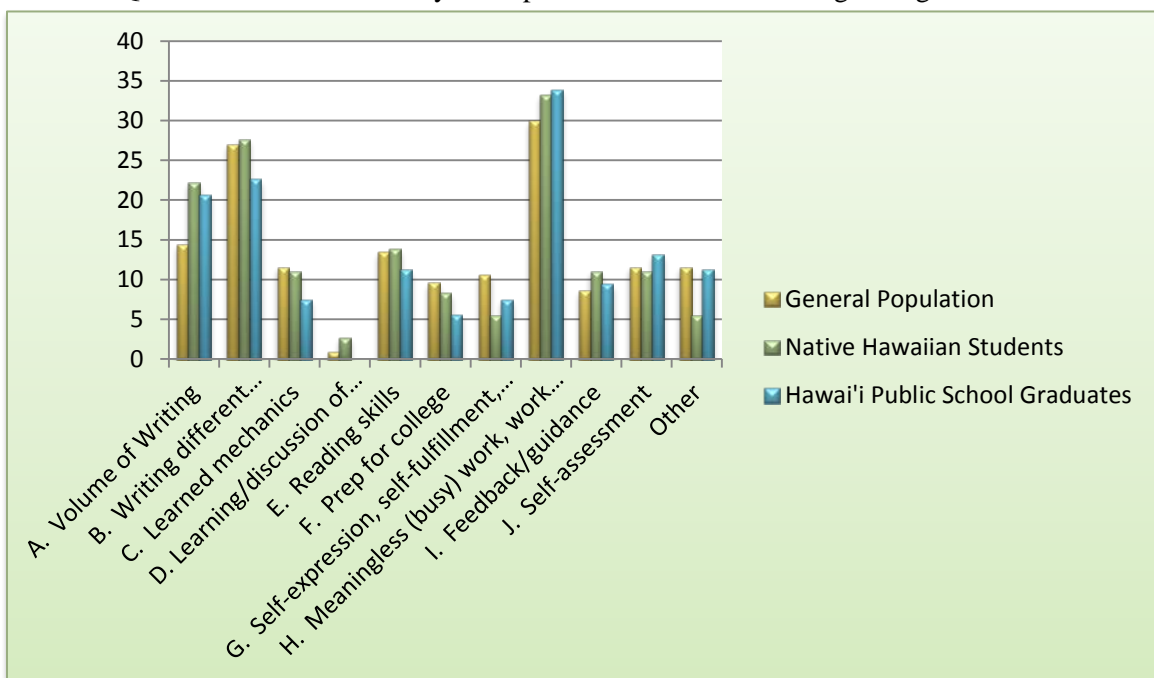
Raw Scores for UH Hilo (General population versus HI State Public School Graduates)
QUESTION 1: What was your experience in terms of writing in High School?

	Total Population (103)	Native Hawaiian Students (Public and Private) (36)	Hawai'i Public School Graduates (53)
A. Volume of writing, practices writing, writing to improve	15	8	11
B. Writing different forms/styles/genres of essays	28	10	12
C. Learned mechanics	12	4	4
D. Learning/discussion of topics/ideas/events	1	1	0
E. Reading skills—literary appreciation	14	5	6
F. Preparation for college (AP, Honors, SAT practice)	10	3	3
G. Self-expression, self-fulfillment, creativity	11	2	4
H. Meaningless (busy) work, work for grade, to fulfill a requirement	31	12	18
I. Feedback/guidance	9	4	5
J. Self-assessment	12	4	7
K. Other (including no answers)	12	2	6

The percentile distribution of responses among local public High School graduates versus the general population reveals a more precise picture and shows the all-around level of disengagement on the part of both data sets.

Percentile Differentiation for UH Hilo (General population versus HI State Public School Graduates)

QUESTION 1: What was your experience in terms of writing in High School?



	Total Population (103)	Native Hawaiian Students (Public and Private) (36)	Hawai‘i Public School Graduates (53)
A. Volume of writing, practices writing, writing to improve	14.5%	22.2%	20.7%
B. Writing different forms/styles/genres of essays	27.1%	27.7%	22.6%
C. Learned mechanics	11.6%	11.1%	7.5%
D. Learning/discussion of topics/ideas/events	5%	2.7%	0%
E. Reading skills—literary appreciation	13.5%	13.8%	11.3%
F. Preparation for college (AP, Honors, SAT practice)	9.7%	8.3%	5.6%
G. Self-expression, self-fulfillment, creativity	10.6%	5.5%	7.5%
H. Meaningless (busy) work, work for grade, to fulfill a requirement	30.1%	33.3%	33.9%
I. Feedback/guidance	8.7%	11.1%	9.4%
J. Self-assessment	11.6%	11.1%	13.2%
K. Other (including no answers)	11.6%	5.5%	11.3%

Fewer students were likely to indicate that they had received any instruction in grammar—percentages in Spring of 2011 were 13% and 23%, whereas this cohort reported 11% or less among all subgroups. The same drop in responses were seen for category F which indicates students seeing high school writing as directly tied to college preparation. This category fell to under 10 percent for all sub-groups as well.

Conversely, noticeably increased percentiles were noted for Categories H (perceptions that indicate that prior work in High School is meaningless or has no values to students) and J (self-assessments of previous work).

A sampling of answers for the top two most frequent responses is given below:

B. Writing different forms/styles/genres of essays

- “In High School my writing experience consisted of having to take all four years of English which included various types of writing opportunities. In the past I’ve written persuasive essays, poems, sonnets, free-writes, and reflection essays. I’ve been required to include embedded quotes as well as in-text citations.” (Native Hawaiian student, Hawai‘i Private Institution)
- “In High School I was at the two extremes of the scale with my experience of writing. In the Beginning of high school (Freshmen year) [sic], I had an enjoyment of writing poetry. Poetry was my utopia from this cruel, peaceless [sic] world we live in. Poetry took me to a whole different universe where there was just me and my thoughts. This was a great time. But later came junior year, where my english [sic] Language teacher just destroyed me. This was on the Low end of the spectrum. She just didn’t give me, any useful advice which during that year I disliked my writing & my poetry didn’t help at all. In my senior year I believe I gain [sic] much more skills to become a better writer. We did a research paper in both my junior & senior year and I felt so amazed at my senior one due to the advancement & empowerment I did. [sic] So my experience in writing in high school was both good & bad.” (Japanese-American Student, Hawai‘i Public School—O‘ahu)
- “In high school, I was enrolled in a lot of science courses and I’ve done quite a few lab reports & research papers. Also, I’m pretty comfortable writing poetry but essays throw me off a little.” (Asian-American Student, Hawai‘i Public School—O‘ahu)

- “In high school my writing experience started off well because my teacher made sure we had the help we needed as well as understood everything we learned. Further in high school it got bad with the constant change of teachers in my sophomore year, but in my junior year it got better because my teacher helped teach us how to write a research paper as well as give feedback. In my senior year I felt I didn’t get enough help and I relied more on my junior year of work to help me write my scholarship essays.” (Native Hawaiian student, Hawai‘i Public School—Big Island)
- “Just the general required classes. I had to write a few long essays, and tots [sic] of journal entries.” (Anglo-American student, Idaho state)

H. Meaningless work, work for grade

- “My experience with writing in highschool [sic] wasn’t great. I usually got a C average in writing.” (Asian-American student, Hawai‘i Public School—O‘ahu)
- “Was junk, because we never learn alot [sic].” (Native Hawaiian student, Charter School—Big Island)
- “I found my high school writing experience to be very Boring [sic]. my [sic] classes were repetitive and unimaginative as far as curriculum.” (Asian-American student, Hawai‘i Public School—Big Island)
- “Personally I was never a very strong writer of [sic] all through high school. I just did the minimum to get the grade.” (Japanese-American student, Hawai‘i Public School—Big Island)
- “It was chill. I didn’t really write a lot of papers past 10th grade. But when I did it was always about a topic I liked so I liked writing.” (Native Hawaiian student, Hawai‘i Private Institution—Big Island)
- “My freshman and sophomore years, I didn’t do too much writing. My junior year, [sic] was a lot of comprehension. My senior year I did some research papers, but a lot of first person writing.” Asian-American student, Hawai‘i Private Institution—O‘ahu)

Comparing the percentile differentiation, Hawai‘i public school students did differ significantly from the general population with regard to the area of research. While the overall percentage of students reporting experience in this area increased to 26.7% of the total population and 30.5% among Native Hawaiian students, DOE students trailed at 20.7%.

Of particular note was one survey respondent who writes: “I attended an AP English class in my senior year of high school. The reason I signed up for this particular class was to challenge myself. At the end of the year, I had not taken the AP credit test due to my not having the money.” Interestingly, the student indicated that s/he was not a Pell Grant recipient. This would indicate that the general markers for socio-economic disadvantage (such as Pell Grant) may not fully capture the high-risk our particular students face in completing (if not taking full advantage of) their education. It may therefore behoove us to consider collecting more data on this particular aspect of students’ academic experiences in future surveys and run correlation studies to see if there is a noticeable link between student writing performance, engagement with the skill, and financial stress.

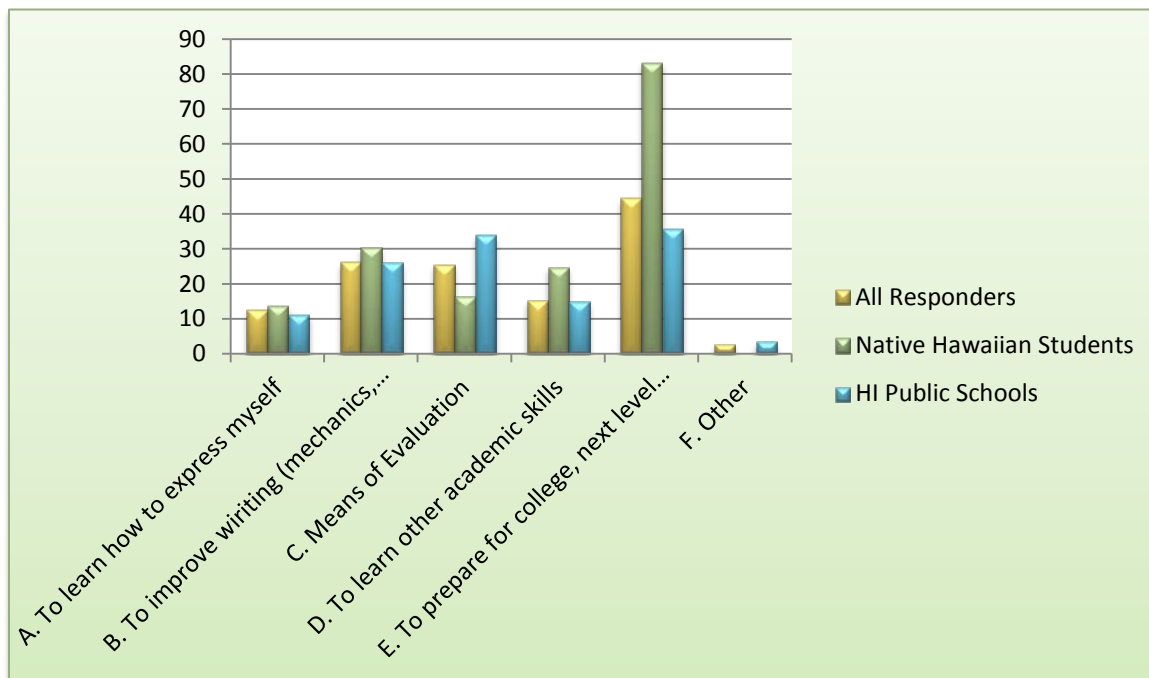
Nevertheless, the rise of Category H to the second most frequent response in this survey suggests that our population of students have been exposed to less than ideal conditions in secondary level classrooms when it comes to writing. Not only are large sets of students reporting that they have done little if no writing at all in the classroom prior to admittance to UH Hilo, but that what they have already done is seen as being of very little academic or intellectual benefit.

This segues into data collected on “Question 4: In your opinion, what was the purpose of writing?”

Percentile Differentiation for UHH

(General population versus HI State Public School Graduates versus Native Hawaiian Responders)

QUESTION 4: In your opinion, what was the purpose of writing in High School?



While we must acknowledge that the data sampling is small, the way the different populations see the “purpose” of writing in high school significantly vary. Surprisingly, Native Hawaiian students from both public and private schools overwhelmingly saw writing instruction in high school as college or workplace preparation (83.3%), with DOE graduates trailing by approximately 40 points (35.8%). DOE students also trailed behind the overall population count as well for this question: 44.8% compared to 35.8%.

An overall sampling of responses to Question 4 is below:

- “I don’t think High School prepares [sic] you for university. The writing just felt like busy work.” (African-American student, Michigan)
- “To show what I learned in class or what I already knew.” (Hispanic student, Hawai‘i Public School—Kaua‘i)
- “To teach the material & show we understand it.” (Mixed heritage student, Hawai‘i Public School—Big Island)
- “I never thought about it. It was just something that everyone goes through.” (Anglo-American student, Hawai‘i Public School—Big Island)
- “To pass the class and get a good grade.” (Native Hawaiian student, Hawai‘i Public School—Big Island)
- “I think the purpose of writing was to help me prepare for college level writing as well as to educate me to write in order to survive in the world.” (Native Hawaiian student, Hawai‘i Private Institution—Big Island)
- “The main purpose in my opinion is to prepare me for college writing courses and also for other future needs.” (Pacific Islander student, Federated States of Micronesia)

The consistency of responses in both AY 2010-2011 and AY 2011-2012 suggests that student attitude towards writing is poor at the time of entry into ENG 100. Coupled with data that shows rising DWF rates in these classes (from less than 15% in Spring of 2010 to more than 20% in Spring of 2011) indicate more work may be needed to address the problem of disengagement on pedagogical and curricular levels. Ongoing reform in the public schools with the shift to Common Core State Standards and End-of-Course competency exams in Expository Writing (11th grade) which are both geared towards college-readiness may result in more rigorous experiences for students. Surveys should be run in another two or three years to see if any changes to student attitudes occur.