What do students communicate about the relationship between school and internships?

Abstract

During the 2008-09 school year, the High Tech High Media Arts internship program underwent significant change, prompting my interest in learning the students’ perspectives on the relationship between school and internships. By understanding the students’ views, I hoped to develop and continue to refine an integrated curriculum that spans school and work. In the first half of this project, I studied students not in my class who participated in internships. In the second half of this project, I implemented projects with my own students who had internships. Students desire simple, coherent curricula that bring internship to school and structure their experiences into personalized, open-ended projects. As the HTH internship program continues to change, the advisory program and academic class provide fertile homes for the continued growth of an integrated experience.

Introduction

When I first came to the High Tech High village, I was immediately impressed by the level, depth and complexity of the connections the schools had established with the surrounding community. Students regularly attend “power lunches” with local businesspeople, local professionals participate as resources in almost every stage of the curriculum and most noticeably, every student participates in an internship in which they are treated as an adult working at a local business or non-profit organization. Later, I learned of the HTH design
principles and understood that I was intrigued by the many manifestations of HTH’s "adult world connection."

The most natural place to look for the adult world connection is the HTH internship program, which presents itself as a particularly fertile topic for research as the three HTH high schools in Pt. Loma are collectively undergoing a wholesale revision and redesign of this fundamental element of the school.

The new plan expands on the requirement that all juniors complete an internship in which they work at a local business or non-profit for one semester. During the course of the internship semester, students begin by working two afternoons per week, which follows the original HTH internship model. The revised internship semester now includes a two-week immersion in which students participate in the full workday at their internship site (and not attending school), and then return to the two-afternoon-per-week schedule for the remainder of the semester. Teachers are asked to develop a curriculum that uses the internship experience as the central "text" for the development of coursework and projects. Also, teachers visit each student at their internship and hold seminars at internship sites during the two-week immersion experience.

There has never been such a comprehensive approach to internships in the multiple HTH schools and I am very interested in understanding what students communicate about the connections between school and their experience as interns in a professional workplace. In the context of the renewed focus on improving the internship program, I have many questions: What do students say about their internships? What do they say about the projects they do at school during that semester? What do they write in their journals? What relationships exist between these experiences and what do students communicate about these connections?
I hope to learn as much as possible from the first students to embark on this experience, develop my own projects based on these findings, and reflect on what I learn from my students and others through the course of the first year of the new internship program.

**Literature Review & Understandings**

A long history of education through apprenticeships exists across many cultures; only recently has education come to mean exposure to abstract concepts in a setting that is somewhat removed from the community. HTH, through its design principles, stands in marked contrast to the abstract approach of learning defined by subject matter in an environment segregated from the "real world."

Tracing the HTH internship backwards through history leads one immediately to *The New Urban High School: A Practitioners Guide*, which establishes “Adult World Connection” and “Community Partnership” as two of six key design principles that lead to the success of a variety of high-performing urban schools.

The New Urban High School establishes Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS) and Turner Tech in Miami, FL as exemplary models of truly integrated academic internship programs. One case study illustrates an individual student’s perceptions of the connection between "working" and "thinking" as well as a reflection upon the long-term effects of such an experience:

“As Ramon puts it, “My internship is not about working at the hospital and thinking in the school. The work and thinking go on simultaneously all the time. ” Nor does this internship in a hospital limit his career options; having started out with an interest in finance, Ramon is now interested in the relation between data collection and public policy” (NUHS, p17).
Students and parents frequently assume internships are a path to a career, when in reality they are an access point to the educated, adult world. According to The New Urban High School Project, “Turner [Tech, in Miami, FL] has, in effect, gotten rid of the “old vocationalism” by eliminating the division between vocational and academic subjects, by ensuring that all students are exposed to cutting-edge tools and technology, and by exposing students to a broad industry. In fact, linking hands-on learning with strong academics has led previously disengaged students to become active and excited learners.” The authors go on to describe how students at Turner have become certified in various vocational programs but have actually used the certification process as a key component to a “broad and rigorous” secondary education that leads to college (NUHS, p. 63).

One main lesson that internships—and the adult world connection in general—teaches us is to be open to new things as students and teachers. Time and time again, students and teachers alike seize the opportunity to do real work of lasting value and as their significance in society is appreciated, they blossom into new people that may be quite different from who they are in the day-to-day grind of tests, homework, lunch duty and endless attempts to complete projects or cover curricula. Again, CPESS, as documented in The New Urban High School Project, offers an example of how the adult world can bring out the best in students:

“CPESS initiated community service for a practical purpose: to free-up common planning and meeting time for teachers. Sending all eighth through tenth graders out to community service placements for a half day each week, they reasoned, would open up several hours for teacher planning, while giving students something worthwhile to do. What the staff did not anticipate was just how powerful these experiences would prove for engaging and motivating students. Site supervisors from local non-profit settings such as schools, museums, day care centers, nursing
homes, and government offices, began sending in glowing evaluations of previously unengaged students and many began earning grades of “distinguished” and showing new confidence in themselves” (NUHS, p. 17).

Carol Ann Tomlinson's work in the book *Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom: Strategies and Tools for Responsive Teaching* as well as the article "Invitations to Learn" published in *Educational Leadership*, Sept. 2002 establishes that students have five basic needs at school—affirmation, contribution, power, purpose and challenge. While internships do not guarantee that any student will experience all five of these basic needs satisfactorily, internships do offer a unique opportunity to address at least one, if not all, of these fundamental elements of education.

I see the HTH internship program as a natural extension of Tomlinson’s work. Although Tomlinson’s work may be primarily understood in the context of differentiation, internships appear to be a logical manifestation of differentiation at HTH. To begin, a primary understanding of differentiation can be see in the individual placements of students—HTH makes every effort to accommodate the needs and desires of each student by placing him or her in a field that strikes a personal interest, with a mentor that is a good personal fit, and in a physical work environment that supports the student’s needs. Specifically focusing on Tomlinson’s work, a good internship meets all of the basic “five needs”: affirmation, contribution, power, purpose and challenge. Students are affirmed repeatedly throughout the internship by a close relationship with a caring mentor and by teachers at school. HTH strives to ensure that all students complete a substantive project that contributes to the needs of the workplace during internship. The professional environment of internship—and the fact that interns often take on many of the responsibilities of their mentors or other employees—ensures that students feel a sense of power. The purpose of
Internship can be seen in many ways—to learn about life, to become interested in college, to develop professional relationships and skills—and as a result, students can explain why they participate in this program. Finally, the stakes are raised by internship. The standards for quality are often higher than at school, the expectations of professionalism are elevated and often seemingly simple aspects like commuting are new to students. As a result, the internship program inherently challenges students (Educational Leadership, p. 6-10).

Because HTH works with internship mentors to provide a personalized and appropriate placement for each student, the “work” of the internship provides a uniquely fertile field from which teachers may harvest highly developed projects. But in practice, how are internships related to the experience of attending school each day, trying to complete Math, Biology, and Humanities (integrated English and History) classes?

In Situated Learning, Lave and Wegner make the case that internships, while historically quite appropriate as an educational form with literally hundreds—possibly thousands—of years of cross-cultural examples, has been “overlooked” by numerous educational reform efforts because it does not fit into traditional definitions of “progress” (Lave & Wegner, p. 62).

HTH teachers are beginning to develop curriculum centering on the question of identity. This is very legitimate, as recent history at school suggests that many students enter their internship with questions of “Can I be me at this new place?” which reveals an underlying question of “Who am I?” Internships have a unique ability to bring the question of identity as it relates to education to the surface of a student’s experience because of the new social network that must be quickly established to support the related activities. The question of identity becomes an explicit questioning of the relationships on maintains (Lave and Wegner, p.53).
HTH teachers are also exploring the relationship between the internship mentor and the student as a probable area for structured learning activities. Because this relationship is markedly different from the typical teacher-student relationship, a unique opportunity presents itself for students to reflect upon and learn from this new personal dynamic. As Lave and Wegner write in Situated Learning, “In apprenticeship, opportunities for learning are, more often than not, given structure by work practices instead of by strongly asymmetrical master-apprentice relations” (Lave and Wegner, p. 93).

In Real Learning, Real Work, by Adria Steinberg, the conceptual framework for the internship program at High Tech High is outlined with detailed examples. Rob Riordan, an HTH faculty member, contributed a chapter to this book in which he describes the “hands on humanities” curricula that are derived from work experiences of students at Polaroid. Riordan describes the numerous connections, ranging from content to skills and beyond, that naturally develop in a humanities class that uses the work experience (or real world) as the “central text” of the class. From students who connect to literature through the feelings and problems they encounter at internship to specific projects including an internship-inspired newsletter, the “hands-on humanities” curriculum is an active exploration of the world in the context of reading, writing, philosophy, literature, social studies, and more (Although Real Learning, Real Work is authored by Steinberg, because some citations are taken from Riordan’s writing, those citations are herein referenced by both authors, as follows: Steinberg & Riordan, p. 130-140).

The projects Riordan outlines span much of what is considered a traditional humanities curriculum: they cover reading and writing, literature and social studies, and provide ample room for creativity and analysis. From here, these projects merely need an update for the 21st century: the newsletter or journal entries become blogs. The photo essay includes digital cameras and
photo editing software for additional layers of expression. The connections to literature are as ripe as they ever were and the current worldwide economic situation provides even more questions for students to bring to their mentors and teachers. The conceptual framework of a hands-on humanities curriculum should be considered the basic intellectual groundwork that HTHMA teachers strive for in designing the projects described within this action research project.

**Description of the Setting**

This research study is taking place at High Tech High Media Arts Media Arts, a small public charter high school located in San Diego, California. High Tech High Media Arts serves approximately 400 students from across San Diego County.

The student body is divided into grades nine through twelve, with approximately 100 students per grade. Students are admitted through a zip code-based lottery system designed to ensure that the student body represents a fair demographic sample of the greater San Diego community. In the fall of 2008, High Tech High Media Arts was composed of 393 students, 51% of which are male and 49% are female. Racially, High Tech High Media Arts is 9% Asian/Pacific Islander, 11% African American, 35% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Native American and 42% Caucasian (percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding). 11% of High Tech High Media Arts students are enrolled in various special education programs while 30% of the student body receives free or reduced lunches.

At High Tech High Media Arts, students and teachers work within a project-based learning pedagogical system. Furthermore, HTHMA follows the High Tech High design principles of Personalization, Adult World Connection and Common Intellectual Mission. High
Tech High Media Arts attempts to seamlessly integrate each design principle across a variety of systems in the school. For example, the school encourages teachers to individualize assignments and projects to meet the needs of each student; every student is well known through a teacher-led advisory program; and classes are integrated and small, ensuring that each teacher has time and resources to spend on each individual student. Each of these measures can be seen as a manifestation of the Personalization design element. Students achieve an Adult World Connection through internships, the regular use of professionals and experts in project development and assessment, and a variety of other ways. All classes are integrated and there is no tracking according to previous academic experiences, as well as each class is both preparatory for college and tied to technical education, ensuring that students are part of a Common Intellectual Mission. These design principles are also found in the physical setting, in that classrooms and common spaces are designed to look and feel “professional”, there are numerous open, multi-purpose spaces throughout the school and student work is displayed throughout the facility.

In grades nine and ten, students are separated into two different teams, and take an integrated math/science class and an integrated English/history class, along with an elective. In grade eleven, students are separated into two teams and take an integrated English/history class as well as discrete science and math classes, along with either an elective or internship, depending on the semester. In grade twelve, students take classes in math, science, English and a variety of electives.

During the 2008-2009 school year, students in the eleventh grade spend one semester per year involved in a formal academic internship program. Students leave campus at lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays to work in a variety of capacities throughout the community—some
intern with engineering firms, local military projects, in doctors’ offices, in the local court system, and in a wide variety of other occupations. Interns from High Tech High Media Arts are mentored by an adult professional who has a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Additionally, students on internship engage in an internship immersion. Internship immersion is a two-week experience in which students report to their internship site for a full day of work rather than school. HTH schools are in their first year of utilizing an immersion experience as a component of internship and already it has taken on the central role of the internship semester.

HTHMA has one key structural difference from the other HTH schools in the Pt. Loma HTH Village. High Tech High and High Tech High International utilize an internship-specific class that meets during the internship semester. Various 11th grade teachers at the specific school teach this class. HTHMA is different in that the key academic integration takes place in the 11th grade core classes, not an internship-specific class. Also, 11th graders at HTHMA take an engineering elective, while their counterparts at other HTH schools only take core classes plus the internship class.

During the course of this research study, plans were established to further revise the internship program across the entire HTH village of schools. For HTHMA, that means that in the 2009-2010 school year, all eleventh graders will participate in a three-week immersion-based internship program. Students will make contact with their internship mentors and visit the sites a limited number of times before the immersion begins. Furthermore, the internship coordinator position at HTHMA has been eliminated from HTHMA, and as a result, placement and the students on internship will take place through an advisory-based program to be determined.
All of the students in my survey are enrolled in eleventh grade at HTHMA, are between the ages of 16 and 17. As I am an eleventh grade teacher, I have selected students for the first half of this study who are not on my team—the other eleventh grade team is on internship first semester, while my students are on internship second semester. These students are working on a project in which they document their internship experience, interview coworkers and their mentor and produce a high-quality short film that tells a specific story found within the context of the internship. Additionally, I have conducted informal interviews and analyzed work samples from students from my class on a volunteer basis, surveyed my entire class at the conclusion of their immersion experience, conducted site visits and met with nearly all of the mentors who hosted second-semester interns.

The McBain-Praizner Surveys

HTH Director of Policy and Research Laura McBain and HTH Director of Academic Internships Stacey Praizner surveyed mentors and students following the fall 2008 semester—the initial semester of the new internship program and during the same time that I was conducting the first phase of this research project. The McBain-Praizner student survey collected information from 93% or 148 of the 159 of the eleventh graders at HTH and HTHI that were on internship during the fall 2008 semester. The McBain-Praizner’s student survey offers an overwhelmingly positive view of the HTH academic internship experience. The McBain-Praizner mentor survey collected information from 80 mentors of the 90 internship sites. The McBain-Praizner study focuses on the internship immersion.

The McBain-Praizner survey returned very positive results from the perspective of the HTH internship program—91% of the answers were in the positive categories when all questions
were averaged. 93.2% of the students stated that the immersion experience was a positive one. 84% of students reported that the internship immersion had a somewhat positive or overwhelmingly positive impact on their academic growth.

In the McBain Praisner survey, the most outstandingly positive category was oral communication. only two of the 148 juniors who were surveyed stated that immersion had any type of negative impact on their oral communication skills. A symbiotic relationship in communication was explained by David, a student from my study: "The fact that not everyone sits down in a lecture hall and is given a presentation—we are very involved in the way the class moves, we communicate with our teachers a lot, the interactions the groups, just everything makes it easier to communicate with people like engineers [at my internship]."

The McBain-Praizner mentor survey yielded interesting results considering HTH’s move to an immersion-based internship program. 65% of the mentors surveyed felt that immersion was “just right” and nearly one quarter felt that immersion ran “too long.” Furthermore, 58.8% of mentors agreed with the statement “I would prefer to have an intern two full days a week versus the current structure with immersion.” 41% of mentors agreed with the statement “I found it difficult to occupy my intern’s schedule with meaningful projects during immersion, although the majority of those responses were in the category of “somewhat agree.” In this question, the largest number of responses was the 32% of mentors who strongly disagreed that it was difficult to occupy their intern’s work schedule with meaningful projects during immersion. While there may be some tension or unease among the mentors regarding the internship immersion, it is important to note that 81.2% of mentors agreed with the statement “as a result of the immersion experience, I am more likely to participate in High Tech High internships in the future.” Furthermore, 85% of the mentors also agreed with the statement that “the projects my intern has
been working on are valuable to my organization.” Therefore, the comfort factor with immersion may simply reside in developing a base of mentors and sites that desire this type of program and developing training methods and materials for mentors to ensure that the immersion runs as smoothly as possible.

McBain and Praizner asked twelve related questions that addressed how the immersion experience of internship impacted various aspects of a student’s educational experience, with topics ranging from time management to different forms of communication to “becoming a team player”. Students overwhelmingly responded in a positive manner. Over the course of the twelve questions, the students had an average response of 91% positive responses, across all questions.

**Methods**

*Selecting Students for this Study*

In order to recruit a representative sample of the general HTHMA population, I began by analyzing the list of students on internship during the Fall 2008 semester, their respective internships and consulted with teachers regarding students’ past work habits. My goal was to quickly generate a sample pool of approximately fifteen students that effectively represented High Tech High Media Arts demographically, academically and socially as well as representing the range of internships available to HTHMA students in the Fall 2008 semester.

*Screening Interviews*

Once I established a pool of HTHMA students, I conducted screening interviews to narrow this group down to five HTHMA students interested in participating in my research study as focus students. During the screening process, I was careful to respect the demographics, past
academic achievements and current internship placements of the students so that the sample for this research project is highly representative of the general population. I was also be conscious of general themes as well as outstanding exceptions that make students particularly well suited for a research project such as mine—such as availability for and willingness to participate in interviews, willingness to share work and peer groups.

Students from the Screening Interview group who are not selected as focus students were asked to serve as understudies in the case that a member of the focus cannot complete the project. One focus group student did drop out of the study during the immersion experience; as a result, no data from his experience is included and a different student was selected to take his place. Due to student availability, the student who dropped out was replaced with a student who shared some characteristics, but was different in others; as a result, one specific type of internship placement is not represented in this study. For more information on the internship placements highlighted in this study, please see the Findings section.

The Focus Students

Much of the data for this research project came from five focus students. I closely monitored these students' experiences through interviews, focus group discussions, analysis of journal entries and work samples. In order to preserve the authenticity of the overall internship experience, I asked these students to not reveal that they are part of this study until after the semester is complete (so no teacher or mentor treats them differently, thus biasing the sample group that I have selected). All students' identities are concealed through the use of pseudonyms.
Following the second semester internship immersion experience—the immersion that students from my classes experienced—I conducted an anonymous survey that addressed issues and questions specific to my class, my curriculum and projects and HTHMA as a school. I then compared these results to the McBain-Praizner survey and the results from my first semester interviews. This survey was completed anonymously to conceal student identities.

Work Samples

Wherever possible, I collected work samples from the focus students and from volunteers in my own class. Often these work samples were journal entries, reflective writings or pieces of writing that directly addressed their experiences as interns. As a result, I treated these work samples similarly to the thoughts expressed during interviews.

Data Collection & Analysis

My primary method of data analysis for interviews, focus groups and work samples was to analyze and code these communications for key concepts, repetition and intensity. Data analysis was ongoing and in itself was a research method, as the information generated at each stage of the process interview informed the questions that went into subsequent stages of research. Additionally, I analyzed the numerical data generated by the survey of my students, looking for any correlations between questions.

Teachers

As the school year progressed, I realized that I needed more input from 11th grade teachers in order to design my curriculum and more fully understand the students experiences. As a result, I interviewed six 11th grade teachers during the beginning of the Spring 2009
semester. This sample of teachers was created on a purely voluntary basis, and each of the three HTH high schools in the HTH Village was represented by at least one teacher. All teachers' identities are concealed throughout this research project to protect their anonymity.

Second Semester’s Curriculum and Reflections

As the second semester began, I implemented my own curriculum, based on what I learned from the focus students and teacher interviews. During this time, I surveyed my students, compiled and analyzed this data, as well as used work samples and informal interviews to guide ongoing curriculum development.

Instruments

Permission Letter for Students and Permission Letter for Parents

These letters outline my research project, as well as the potential benefits, risks, and costs to participants. These letters were the initial introduction students and parents for my research project and they represent a legal necessity to ensure that all everyone involved in the research was treated fairly. See Appendix 1 for the Parent Letter. See Appendix 2 for the Student Letter.

Screening Interview

These interviews were used to narrow the group of students initially recommended for this study down to the actual five students who made up the Extended Focus Group. See Appendix 3 for sample questions from the Screening Interview.

Focus Group Protocol
Focus groups or small group conversations were used to discuss internship experiences, establish a common language for expressing ideas, and gauge the relative intensity of each individual's ideas. See Appendix 4 for the Focus Group protocol.

Sample Interview Questions

I conducted interviews with my Extended Focus Group throughout the semester. This was the primary method for gathering data for the first stage of this research project. Since we mainly discussed various events at school and internship, the subject matter and schedule of interviews as followed the natural arc of the fall internship semester at HTHMA. See Appendix 5 for Sample Interview Questions.

Spring 2009 Survey

To understand my class in clear, numerical snapshots, I used a survey based on questions that students might strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with. See appendix 6 for the spring 2009 survey.

The Photo Essay Project Sheet

This project description offers an example of a major assignment completed by my second semester Humanities classes during and immediately following Internship Immersion. See Appendix 7 for the Photo Essay project sheet.
Findings

In the first phase of my Action Research, my work with students embarking on HTHMA’s first semester operating within the new immersion-centered internship format could best be understood as my attempts to understand the nature of internships within this school—what works, what does not, and why. These students understood that they were part of an experimental group, not only within the context of my thesis, but that HTHMA and the HTH Village was actively searching for significant improvements in the internship program. Furthermore, these students knew that they were also being asked to participate in academic experiences that were new to HTHMA—that no class before them had attempted a fully integrated curriculum between internships and any other class.

Initially I focused on five students that represented the first group from HTHMA to embark on the new HTH internship program. Within this section, I present each student as a short case study, with common themes developed below.

Student Portraits—Fall 2008

Sarah

Sarah is an African-American female student who was an intern with the California Innocence Project at the California Western School of Law during the fall 2008 semester. Her teachers describe Sarah as “hard working”, “motivated” and “optimistic”. She maintains a 3.53 grade point average. Sarah lives in a two-bedroom apartment in an urban setting a few miles east of downtown San Diego. Sarah lives with her mother, who attended but did not complete college, although they have very high hopes for Sarah. Sarah also qualifies for free or reduced lunch.
Prior to starting her internship, Sarah responded to the writing prompt “what do you want to get out of internship?” Sarah had numerous goals, which she detailed in a page of writing. She wrote that she wanted “to gain knowledge about how law school works… to sit inside a real court hearing… to enjoy my internship… to make sure this experience is a positive one… [and] to get a college recommendation.”

Midway through the semester, when Sarah and I spoke, she appeared to be having a very positive experience at the California Innocence Project. According to Sarah, “It’s amazing what the CIP does—they free people who are factually innocent but they were proven guilty.” Sarah seemed fascinated by this work, describing people who were in prison for many years—some for over 20 years—who were innocent but wrongfully imprisoned due to errors in the court proceedings, witnesses committing perjury or similar problems with their court proceedings. She described one case in particular that she worked on recently in which a teenager was sent to go to prison for a crime his father committed—and his father confessed shortly before dying, after his son had been imprisoned for 13 years.

Sarah explained that people at her internship work very hard, but according to Sarah, “you have to do something you love.” Sarah had interviewed staff members at the CIP and “everyone I interviewed said it’s not about the money. It’s about, at the end of the day, I helped someone get their life back.”

During the first weeks of the semester, Sarah wrote an in-class reflection about her experiences at internship. She wrote, “I really like my internship because we got to actually read real cases. My case was about this guy who’s trying to prove he’s innocent and wants the CIP to re-open his case. He’s been sentenced to 111 years…” She goes on to describe a gang-related shooting in which her client claims he was not at the scene of the crime. In this sense, all five of
Tomlinson’s student needs—affirmation, contribution, power, purpose and challenge—appear to be engaged by Sarah’s internship. Sarah is affirmed that she is doing something important by her coworkers and by the nature of her work. She feels powerful—her work could change someone’s life forever. She feels a numerous reasons to do the work and do it well. And she is challenged by the intellectual level and level of professionalism at her work.

I asked Sarah to talk about her experiences at school and how they might relate to internship. Sarah described a long-term Humanities project, known as "This American Life." Sarah explained that in this project, students worked to create short documentaries that told the "underneath story" of their internship experience, a specific person at their internship, the company as a whole or something similar. Students analyzed examples from National Public Radio and Showtime's productions of This American Life in both video and radio broadcasts. All of the students in her humanities class—which is all of the students from HTHMA on internship during the fall 2008 semester—completed this project. Sarah's video "was meant to show how emotional it is for the exonerees to finally be released and how the CIP changes their lives."

As Sarah explained, "I go to school and what's linking me and my internship is that documentary, that project, but if that project wasn't there, then I'd just be doing their project [the internship site's work] and that wouldn't relate in any way to school."

Sarah continued, saying, “I think the teachers need to talk to each other." Sarah described the simplicity of having only two core teachers in ninth and tenth grade (integrated math & science and humanities) with integrated projects—in her words, “it was so beautiful!”

When Sarah addressed the specific curriculum in her classes, she talked about how she did a lot of SAT-oriented work in math for much of the first semester. In Humanities, she worked on This American High School Life in class and “have a little history for a day or two
here or there.” In humanities, they often read and do what might be identified as traditional history or English assignments at home. During school hours, her class humanities class traveled back and forth between the multimedia lab and their classroom to work on This American High School Life, which Sarah considers an internship-related assignment. In Sarah's opinion, “It just wasn’t working.”

Sarah expressed frustration with the demands of her schedule at HTHMA during internship. She takes Humanities, Math and Engineering, but focused her tension on engineering. Sarah said, “You can’t really combine internship with this [engineering].” Venting, she sarcastically commented, "I mean what are you going to do, build a movie camera and then use it? The schedule is sort of weird.” She then continued in a more measured tone, "I think engineering should be optional. I know I'm not going to be an engineer. It's not on the SAT. It's not anything to me, it's just another class that I have to get a good grade in. I think that hour or that time could be used for math, maybe. You could have one hour where you have math for the SAT or time for projects."

David

David is a Mexican-American student who interned with CalTrans. David maintains a 2.76 GPA. David lives with his mother and father in suburban San Diego, a few miles outside of the city. His mother has an associates’ degree and his father attended college and graduate school.

David’s teachers describe him as “curious”, “insightful” and “whimsical”. David's intern experience has been defined by being in what he described as the "wrong" internship. He desired work with natural sciences, but was placed in a job that focused on work with CAD software and
civil engineers. Midway through his internship, he requested that his job-responsibilities change, and was assigned work restoring historic photographs with photo-editing software.

In the opening weeks of internship, David wrote, “The first day was pretty standard, me becoming familiar with the system and the people. I feel like I’m going to have a lot of freedom at my site. Should be a good environment for me.”

However, when David sat down with me for his interview, he said within the first few minutes, “I was not too big on it [internship]. It just wasn’t really challenging for me.” David described how he started as an assistant to an engineer, which was far too challenging, “They tried to get me to use all these different programs that were very difficult for me to pick up on. I would be very surprised if anyone with however long we had for internship—the short frame of time we had for internship—would be very hard to pick up on these programs to—They’re like drawing programs and I wasn’t having a very easy time with it so I kind of switched over.”

When he switched to restoring historic photos, he was doing work that was far too easy for him.

I asked David to describe how he ended up in this situation. He explained that he wanted a science-based internship, but “when I was thinking of the physical sciences I wasn’t thinking of building roads. I really wanted an internship at SPAWAR, because I’ve heard they have a variety of really cool internships… I would say that the combination of things that went wrong were that I didn’t explain myself correctly, I should have asserted what I wanted more, and that the interviewers sort of grabbed onto a whim—they picked up a small idea and pulled it as far away as they could… The just ran wild with it.”

David’s troubles can again be traced back to Tomlinson’s needs and as well as a basic understanding of the HTH design principle of Personalization. First, David uses the same language of Tomlinson—he was not challenged at internship. Second, David feels like the adults
responsible for his placement did not listen to him well—and, he also takes responsibility for not clearly articulating his preferences (Educational Leadership, p. 6-10).

When we discussed the structure of internships at HTHMA, David described the differences in productivity between the twice-weekly afternoon session of internship and the immersion experience: “Nothing really gets done on the days when you just go from 1 to 4. My internship site starts going to lunch at 12:30, so there’s a half hour of the day where no one’s back in, my mentor’s not back in yet. It’s just not as productive [as the immersion experience].”

When discussing the immersion, David struck a different note. "I think the two week immersion should be a longer immersion and the 'during-school-days', the 1 to 4:30's [on Tuesdays and Thursdays] should be dramatically reduced." As continued to think aloud, David proposed another schedule, "Have internship week by week, so we go internship, school, internship, school... Combine the hours."

Regarding the immersion, David said that he is most productive during “the days where you come in early, sit down, get a huge chunk of your work done right away in the morning and polish off whatever you need to get done in the afternoon. That’s more like a normal workday.”

I asked David to think of school and internship as two people in a relationship. He described the relationship as one that “needs a little bit of work. It [the relationship] needs to be changed in the way that we have unrelated topics. We’re working on one thing at internship and we’re working on one thing at school and they don’t seem to come together very well. We kind of tried to do it with the This American Life thing, and that was great for [humanities] class, but then in [math] class… [there] was like a spreadsheet where we mapped out a career and it didn’t integrate very well. And of course, [engineering class is] on his own curriculum, so it was very
difficult if not impossible for him to incorporate internship into engineering. And, he has a very rigorous curriculum, so that was difficult for us to deal with.”

I asked David to reflect on the role of communication skills at school and internship. David reflected on the nature of HTHMA as it led to the development of his communication skills: "The fact that not everyone sits down in a lecture hall and is given a presentation—we are very involved in the way the class moves, we communicate with our teachers a lot, the interactions the groups, just everything makes it easier to communicate with people like engineers [at my internship]."

David stated, "I think the best part of the semester is just seeing where we're going, with, you know, 'the real world', the future. I would definitely advise that people have internships. I think that they're a great idea. I think it puts people into work situations that aren't necessarily related to school and people can see that everyone does projects, it's not just High Tech High Media Arts." I followed up and asked David to explain a possible contradiction: he had expounded on the importance of communication and it’s role at school, but poor communication was a problem for him in his internship placement. He said, “I know this now, looking back on it.”

In our interview, I gave David room for any final thoughts. He advised, “Go look for your own [internship]. Because then you can really point out what it is you really want and it doesn’t get lost in translation.”

In one sense, David seems to identify broad connections between school and internship, but in another sense, he focuses on literal, content-based connection. David explains that communication skills play an important role in his overall education and help at internship. Yet,
when we discussed connections with school, he was primarily concerned with content-based connections, with major problems stemming from perceived “unrelated topics.”

Peyton

Peyton is a Caucasian female student who interned at the Small Business and International Trade Center in San Diego. Her teachers describe Peyton as “bright” and “curious” but also “complacent”. She maintains a 3.1 grade point average. Peyton lives with her mother and father in a small house just outside of downtown San Diego. Both of her parents attended some college, but neither attained a bachelor’s degree. Peyton’s mother is completing college this year.

Midway through the semester, Peyton was involved in a group discussion in which she rated her internship experience on a scale of one to four. Peyton gave hers a “four” and wrote, “I was challenged. I got to work on a real client.” Again, we see Tomlinson’s language of “challenge” in the context of a positive internship experience. Also, the idea of “working on a real client” must give the student a sense of power and purpose (Educational Leadership, p. 6-10).

Peyton and I discussed the curriculum at HTHMA during her internship semester and how the two relate. Peyton explained that she feels "well educated in Math and Engineering", but she does not want a content-based connection between internship and humanities. She stated "humanities feels like an extension of my internship...I'd like to do more English, more history, more SAT stuff... I'm going to have to take those in the spring and I'm really nervous about them."
What interested me about Peyton's comments is that her internship seems to me to be directly related to Humanities, especially in terms of content knowledge. I repeatedly prompted her in the interview, citing topics related to business, international relations, international law, politics and government. She explained that her internship required extensive knowledge of current events, explaining "they have CNN playing all day at my internship because you have to be on top of these things! Every time stocks drop or something like that I would know. It's really cool." To me, this seemed like a direct and literal content connection to humanities.

Nevertheless, she maintained that her current academic experiences at school were centered around traditional history and unrelated to internship. She lacked an explicit connection to the study of current events or the background knowledge that provide the context for the international business community in which she works.

As Peyton explained, “my internship is a lot more in the real world than school. At internship I’m learning how to start businesses and at school I’m just learning reading, writing and arithmetic.”

I asked Peyton to think of school and internship as two people in a relationship and she laughed. “They’re acquaintances.” she said after some thought.

I asked why and she explained that there were simply too many things happening that were unrelated. She also cited specific assignments in her explanation, “The field paper—I don’t understand the point of that, especially because we’re just supposed to take the information off of the website… Everybody is plagiarizing it.”

Peyton provided an interesting critique of the site paper. She said, “We’re supposed to tell people about our internship, but I’d like to tell people about what an interesting experience it is.”
Peyton clearly preferred more practical assignments: “The most useful assignment we did was one in math—a monthly expenses thing that we did in Excel. That really gave me a realistic perspective because we had to use the salary that our mentors had or a general salary of a person in that profession. It was very interesting to see everything laid out. I didn’t know about a mortgage or car loans. There’s a lot more to that, that I learned about… I really liked the assignments that gave you a real world perspective.”

Peyton continued, explaining, "If we're going to have a relationship between internship and school, then we should have more personal projects where we really design the project instead of having this strict rubric of 'this needs to be included' and 'this needs to be included'... If they [teachers] made it more open-ended, I would be a lot more able to be involved.”

Peyton summed up her thoughts: “Internship is a really good experience for us. It gives us good experience in the work world where we’re not just flipping hamburgers!”

Alex

Alex is a Caucasian male student who interned at Qualcomm, working with technical audits. He maintains a 3.78 GPA and is described by teachers as “intelligent” and “easy going”. Alex lives with his mother, father and sister in an area of coastal San Diego that has seen a recent dramatic increase in property values. Alex's mother and father have master’s degrees and work at a local research facility owned by the military.

Alex wrote in an internship reflection early in the semester, “I like this internship because they make me feel like an actual employee instead of an intern. I also get an actual office space and work with other people just like at a real office… it was cool to be in an actual office working as a team to accomplish something in the bigger picture.”
In Alex’s writing, he echoes themes from portions of Tomlinson’s themes: being treated as an “actual employee” represents affirmation; working as a team “to accomplish something in the bigger picture” gives him a sense of purpose (Educational Leadership, p. 6-10).

At his internship, Alex worked with technical audits and was highly satisfied with his internship experience, primarily due to the “huge difference” between “working with adults and working with students” through an elevated sense of maturity and purpose (Steinberg, p. 72).

Alex often spoke in broad terms regarding his internship, but stated in an overall sense that HTHMA prepared him “very well” to succeed at his internship. Alex specifically cited elements of HTH schools that are integrated across all grade levels, such as the regular use of a wide variety of software applications, as this was a mandatory skill for his internship. Alex also explained that regular group work on long-term projects was essential to his success at internship, “project-based learned completely helped me because [at internship] all we did was one big project. All of the partners I have worked with at High Tech—I knew how to get along with the people I was working with and get the job done.”

Alex echoed the theme of greater productivity during the immersion experience. He explained “I had been doing a lot of audits and everything and in the end my internship supplied me with graphs of everything I had done. I actually got see how much I had been getting done on the Tuesday/Thursday schedule and then I saw during immersion how much more I got done. I increased my rate of productivity during immersion because I had so much time. And then it went back to the Tuesday/Thursday schedule and I got an average amount done again.”

For Alex, issues with commuting meant that he was less productive on Tuesdays and Thursdays versus his immersion. He explained “It seemed like we drove a lot and then we got there and I just started to get to work and then I had to leave.” He thought aloud twice about
having internship take the entire day of Tuesdays and Thursdays, “A full day
Tuesday/Thursdays—I considered that, but I feel like it would be hard to have your regular
school if you’re missing two out of the five days a week that you have in all your classes.”

Alex continued this line of thought with a criticism of his job duties during the Tuesday
and Thursday internship sessions that followed immersion. “After the immersion, it seemed like
it [internship] almost trailed off… They were just starting to give me busy work because I had
gotten the bulk of what I was supposed to do done.”

Interestingly, although Alex was described as “intelligent but not driven” by his teachers,
he drew rave reviews from his mentor, who specifically singled him out for praise in
conversations with the HTHMA internship coordinator. At the conclusion of the semester, Alex
was offered a paid summer position at his internship site. In light of this, my first instinct is to
reflect on the ideals discovered through the CPESS use of internship—that students who are not
typically engaged in ordinary schoolwork may excel in the real world of work.

Alex also differed from the other students in that he only discussed engineering upon my
prompting. I questioned him: "I’ve heard that a lot of people felt stressed about one of the
classes…” to which he responded, “Engineering? How’d I know that?... I got an “A” in
engineering last semester, but I know exactly what people are talking about. It’s just because that
class is a lot more up to the student than up to the teacher… There’s a lot more responsibility on
the student.” Alex advised, “Sometimes you just have to push through it. It was stressful for me
too, but I pushed through it. Sometimes you just have to sit down and get the job done.”
Lindsay

Lindsay is a half Mexican, half Caucasian student (she considers herself “white”) who lives with close family friends in Chula Vista, which is in southern part of San Diego county. Lindsay maintains a GPA of 2.23. Her father has an associates degree and her mother did not finish high school.

Lindsay interns at the Language Acquisition Resource Center (LARC) at San Diego State University (SDSU). Lindsay described her internship as “kind of chill”—she works behind a desk at which she checks out educational videos, helps SDSU students with software problems and makes instructional videos for the students to use to better learn the software required in their classes.

Early in the year, Lindsay wrote a reflection in which she described her concept of the “world of work.” Lindsay wrote, “I already know that I don’t want to have a boring job that I settled for.” She described how the adults around her work long or uncompromising hours. She writes, “Both of them have the same tired and worn out persona that is the sign of adulthood.”

In a discussion recorded in her class, Lindsay said that she “didn’t care for it at first but got used to it… [she] had nothing to do most of the time.”

Lindsay’s internship was somewhat technology based. She said, “I wouldn’t say that I’m old fashioned, but I’m not that into computers. I’ll go on the internet or whatever, email and all that, texting all the time, video games, but I don’t like having to know how to use stuff on the computer.” Naturally, to an adult, the list of technology-based activities that Lindsay listed might seem to contradict her statement that she is “not that into computers,” but this could simply be a generational difference—Lindsay sees the basic use of computer, cell phone, video games and
the internet as simple everyday tasks, not evidence of any aptitude or inclination towards technology.

Lindsay did emphasize the importance of the technology used at HTHMA in the successes she had at her internship. “We use computers all the time [at HTHMA] so we have to practice everyday with them,” she explained, “So that helped a lot. And a lot of the programs are just common sense… If you know how to save on one thing you can save on anything else.”

Halfway through our interview, Lindsay made her feelings clear about her internship: “I wouldn’t do it again… If I were to do this all over again, I would definitely get my own [internship]. This is just not something I’m interested in at all. It was boring.”

I asked Lindsay if she thought her work was important. She was, after all, helping college students complete their assignments and pass their classes. She said, “If I wasn’t there, they’d be fine. They’ve been there for a while and I’m not going to be there after December and they’ll still be fine.”

I asked Lindsay if she would have an internship if she could do high school over again. She said, “I would have an internship. I think I would just definitely get my own, though. I think it’s a really good experience. Obviously I learned stuff I didn’t know how to do. I think internship is a really good idea.”

Lindsay continued, explaining that internship gave her “a new perspective.” She described the troubles of commuting, taking the bus and multiple trolleys to get to and from her internship site. She said “It makes you appreciate the other things that are a convenience for you.”

Lindsay and I discussed the relationship between school and internship, and like many students, she focused on the literal connections she found in projects. She described difficulties
completing her This American High School Life project—her humanities teacher did not explicitly teach the technical aspects of multimedia production, the multimedia lab was only available on a limited basis, the multimedia teacher was not regularly available, and so on. “A lot of people didn’t really figure out until a week or two ago how they wanted their videos to be [note: we were speaking on the afternoon of her Exhibition]. So the fact that we didn’t know what we were doing, nobody knew what they were doing, it was hard to get help… We all really struggled with that. I know I really struggled.” She described going home the weekend before the project was due and searching on Google for free software that would build a slide show for her with her pictures.

I asked if she was happy with the final product.

“I know I could have done a lot better. But I knew that was all I could do. I had to find other resources and I found it.”

The complexity of the project, which involved developing a compelling story from her internship site, then filming and/or photographing, interviewing, editing, and creating a multimedia piece was simply too much for her and she seemed proud that she had the resilience to search online for software that could solve her problems and produce a final product, even though the product is not her best work.

I asked for her advice for the school to make internship better for the next group of students and she described the end of the last school year. She said, “We didn’t have time to think of what we really wanted. Give the students enough time to write out a really nice resume, and really decide what they want to do and have time to change their minds.” She continued with, “We noticed a pattern: the people who got their own internships liked them and the people who didn’t, didn’t like them.”
Lindsay emphasized that last point as the interview closed: “Get your own internship—get your own!”

Common Themes Among the Five Focus Students

Every student that I spoke with had positive things to say about internship and advised that other students have internships, even knowing that these students might face many of the same pitfalls that they did. Even David, who started his interview by saying that he was at the "wrong" internship, stated that he "would definitely advise that people have internships."

Alex's perspectives provide a valuable insight into the relationship between school and internship. While I remember numerous teachers struggling to understand a literal relationship between our curriculum and internship, especially during our planning sessions at the start of the school year, Alex reflected on the larger themes, design principles and common practices of HTHMA classes and HTH schools. These included the importance of regular use of a variety of software, regular participation in groups, student-directed scheduling and planning long term projects, and the development of a variety of mature communication skills as well as personal qualities of persistence and resilience and strategies to implement them. For Alex, these elements of the HTHMA culture and curriculum led to a successful internship. I give these insights special weight because Alex was so successful at his internship that he was offered a paid position for the summer.

All five focus students said positive things about their individual immersion experiences. The main issues that these students agreed on was that they felt more like professionals, they were more productive and they were more engaged with their jobs at internship, all of which lead to greater satisfaction during the immersion.
Lindsay said, "Immersion was good—that was a good idea, but that should be at the end."

Among other conversations, we found that students need some time to learn the basics of their internship, such as their co-workers names and responsibilities as well as site-specific tasks or software.

Two of the five students recommended that the engineering elective not take place during the internship semester. The focus students expressed a conflict with the need for class-specific materials and extensive in-class lab-time that seems to create an uncomfortable level of stress for them. Furthermore, I believe that the identification of Engineering as an “elective” or otherwise non-core class such as Math or Humanities, results in students singling it out for extra criticism and labeling it as the critical factor that may push them over a perceived edge. For example, David said, “We need to have engineering not coincide with internship… [Engineering] is pretty hard to do at home because I personally don’t have a drill press or a band saw.” I have a hard time imagining a student saying that they should not have Math or History during the internship semester. My hypothesis is based on the student perception that Engineering is not necessary for everyone. Sarah reveals the lack of student understanding as to why HTHMA has every student take engineering in the eleventh grade with her comments: “I know I'm not going to be an engineer. It's not on the SAT. It's not anything to me, it's just another class that I have to get a good grade in.” Remedying the sense of purpose for engineering and the placement could have multiple benefits for HTHMA beyond amplifying the successes of the internship semester.

Since HTH schools are moving to a different internship model, in which the students’ internship experience focuses primarily on immersion, different schedules are possible, so students could take engineering after the internship is over, before immersion begins or in any of a variety of configurations.
Within the context of their work at school, students discussed problems and needs not yet addressed by their projects at HTHMA. As I listened to students talk about their work, I heard a need for directed creativity—that the teacher should provide prompts and a manner in which the students bring content from internship to school for further processing, additional work and eventual manipulation into final products that represent an intellectual and personal development for the student. Peyton’s explained a simple step forward for the internship curriculum: "If we're going to have a relationship between internship and school, then we should have more personal projects where we really design the project instead of having this strict rubric of 'this needs to be included' and 'this needs to be included'... If they [teachers] made it more open-ended, I would be a lot more able to be involved.”

The major project in Humanities, known as “This American High School Life” struck me as a good idea, but it suffered in that it was a long-term project that seemed to have operated as a whole, rather than a series of smaller projects. Were a teacher at HTHMA working solely in his or her own classroom, he or she would probably not be significantly challenged by a long-term multimedia project—in fact many students in the school were in the midst of completing long-term, complex multimedia projects with great success during the same semester. However, while speaking with fall 2008 internship students, some obvious differences stood out. The additional challenge of bringing diverse, often individualized, content back from internship to school demanded a tiered method, in which this content could be processed, digested, and fully understood by students before complex multimedia pieces are attempted.

Beyond the structure of the school, by this time I was already very concerned about my own classes and the fact that internship—and second semester—was right around the corner. I had a better idea of what students liked, what they did not believe it, what they identified as their
needs. But, I still had no idea what I would actually teach, and second semester was only days away.

*Teachers’ Perspectives*

As the first semester drew to a close, I took time to interview several teachers about their experiences working with eleventh graders and various HTH internship programs. I was searching for past experiences, new perspectives and ideas for what could work. We discussed their experiences as eleventh grade teachers, structural elements of HTH that enhance or inhibit the internship program.

Upon reflection, many of the teachers’ perspectives illuminated a common need for additional training, whether it is in how to move past content-based connections or developing projects and curricula.

One teacher explained the trouble of striving for content connections, "It [internship] doesn't have a role in my math class... I've never found an opportunity to say 'this is a math lesson that you can all take to your internship.' Last year I tried a budgeting project...but it felt so hokey.” Another, in frustration, said, “I feel like there is this vision of the perfect situation, but then there’s no nuts and bolts.” A third said teacher said, “What does this look like in my classroom? Everything looks so good [at internship sites], the kids are having these positive experiences, what do you mean now you want me to connect it to my classroom?”

As I considered what these teachers said, I thought back to the initial meetings that we held at HTHMA at the start of the year. One key concept that we returned to was that internship is the “central text.” Yet, I did not know what that meant for my class. I had heard from the first
semester interns that some things worked, while they still needed more room for creativity, more structured and supported opportunities for legitimate open-ended project development.

One teacher explained positive developments in the HTH schools: “[One] thing we do well is we create systems to guarantee that students are doing more than menial administrative-type tasks." She referenced "project proposals" and "exhibitions" as key elements that students do substantive work at the internship. This teacher continued, "The ways that we integrate the experience are more in the skills that we're having them use in our classes—the POL’s [Presentations of Learning], having them present in front of adults, the group work, having to give them different roles in a group project, having to have discussions with adults on a regular basis. I think those are some of the key things that we're doing that integrate."

The above comments provide direction for future teacher training—a focus on the basic elements of HTH schools should help guide teachers to understanding that the beginnings of an integrated curriculum is already established. Also, as HTH schools move to a new model for the 2009-2010 school year and advisory takes a much larger role in internship, these elements of success strike me as important to retain as focal points in the future. These strike me as key points for what may be the 2009-2010 advisory-based internship program, in which advisories spend time developing high quality project proposals.

By this point in my teacher interviews, I had already begun the second semester, and even completed my first internship-related project. Yet, I still felt as if I was on shaky ground. For what felt like the first time in my teaching career, I did not see a distinct plan for the entire semester. I was in need of solutions so I made time to interview one experienced teacher who always struck me as particularly comfortable with the concept of teaching internship and
internship integration within an academic context. I went to this teacher, asking for clarity, personal reflections and whatever guidance he could offer.

"A school is by definition, an academic grove, an academy. It's to be separated from the workplace. So it's a safe place to practice,” he explained, “But I think it can become too safe of a place and become too much to the end of the spectrum and become 'drill and kill' and have nothing to do with the real world. In which case I think it becomes meaningless.... I think a lot more rigor can come about when we attempt relevance. So it's a challenge."

We talked about the stresses that other teachers face related to internship. "In a sense it's asking us to reexamine what it is we do. It's asking us to make bridges toward the workplace from school. And, there's two reasons why there can be pushback or bite-back on that. I think one of the reasons is there can be simply, on the part of the teacher, that [feeling of] 'this is unfamiliar turf, I need help in doing it.' Or it can actually be more philosophical and be 'well, deep down I really don't want to it because I want to have my subject matter remain pristine or remain somewhat unattached to the world—it becomes diluted if you do [connect my subject matter to the world]. So I think there are two reasons for anxiety."

I asked this teacher a question that I had asked all of the students which was, "If your experiences at school and internship represent two people, can you describe their relationship?" This teacher said, "They inform each other… A good project should have application to the real world. Those are definitely more meaningful than ones that don't. Going the other way, can we be informed by what the kids are doing at internship? Absolutely. We can assist them in providing them with the skills, and the information, and the project development for those [internship] projects. So I'm saying yes, they inform each other."
This teacher continued, "Is there room for anybody at any grade level, not just at the eleventh grade who do not see the mission of the Gates Foundation and High Tech High to better prepare our students for the workplace? If it's simply 'we don't know how to do it with internship' then I think it's simply a matter of communication, training and professional development. But if it is 'I want my content to be content' then I think you can get to those teachers by asking 'does your content have a larger purpose, does it have an application?'

I asked this teacher to speculate as to why four out of five students and even experienced teachers interpreted my questions about the relationship between school and internship in a literal, subject-specific manner. This teacher responded, "I think that's the main assumption of the mentors, too. The idea is 'this is an entry level job.' We leave unquestioned the world of work as a place of satisfaction and meaning. That's considered to be philosophy or a recipe for unhappiness down the line if you're not careful. I think question one is 'will this work make you happy?' Question two is 'are you getting skills, are you applying skills, are you learning skills in school, does your mentor have any skills for you?' I think we concentrate on the second one and that's certainly a direct content connection: do you know the math, do you know the science, do you know the reading, do you know the writing? And it's a perfectly good one to ask, but I don't think it's the main one. We don't see it as teachers is because we don't see the forest for the trees. We're already in—we may be exhausted, we may leave the profession—but we are in an inherently satisfying career."

These final segments of the interview were among the most helpful aspects of the Action Research process because they served as a reminder to refocus on the basics. I was learning from the first semester interns that an effective semester integrated with the internship semester meant simpler projects, more streamlined projects. Following this conversation, my thoughts coalesced
around the ideas that my priorities need to be simplified. Upon reflection, it was easy to realize that I too had skipped over the initial question of “does this make me happy.” I too had moved past the philosophical basics and focused on content—concepts of history, economics and literature as well as relevant skills such as journalism, interviewing, reading and writing continued to dominate my thinking. While my classes had begun the mentor interview—and I had started to experiment with the broader purposes of internship (see the next section for more)—I still felt as if I was out of my comfort zone. I had digested the idea that internship experiences should be brought to school, but I still primarily thought in terms of content.

I now began to understand the overarching structure of my action research: students had identified problems and now I would ask my students would help illuminate solutions.

**My Class—Spring 2009**

During the 2008 fall semester at HTHMA, all of the 11th grade teachers with students on internship attempted some form of integration in their classes and even between classes. After discussing their successes and challenges, we decided that during the spring semester, the academic processing of internship experiences would primarily reside in my Humanities class. The other teachers would be free to engage with internship as they pleased, but we would attempt no cross-class integration with internship.

As the internship semester began, I reflected on my own strengths and interests and decided that the Humanities class would approach all of our studies with a journalistic perspective (after all, journalists write the first draft of history) as well as continue our use of current events as a regular anchor-point for our study of American history, culture and literature. With these ideas in mind, I designed four major projects for the semester: a Mentor Interview, a
Photo Essay, Blogging as Writing (a year-long ongoing component of my class) and the culminating collection of all of our efforts in a year-end retrospective project (the format was yet to be determined). Furthermore, I realized that all projects during the second semester would follow very simple guidelines and have at least one very clear open-ended and/or creative component or opportunity.

In this sense, the added pressure of integrating internship refocused my efforts on what HTH faculty might simply describe as 'good teaching.' With the internship experience as the "central text" in our study of Humanities, my projects were simplified; instructions became fewer, shorter and more direct; students' perspectives, interests and experiences were explicitly made the central focus of much of the class; and I attempted to clearly communicate my behind-the-scenes thinking regularly throughout project design, development and assessment.

Following the internship immersion, I surveyed my students with a series of questions that were specific to my class and HTHMA as a whole. My survey revealed results similar to the positive data found in the McBain-Praizner survey. I surveyed 46 of my 48 students, and found that 96% agreed with the statement "In general, the culture of HTHMA prepared me well for a successful internship" (see fig. 1). To follow up and learn why two students strongly disagreed with the idea that HTHMA prepared them for a successful internship, I found that there were two students with a particularly challenging relationship with their mentor and one of them has recently received a negative review during her immersion. Furthermore, 98% agreed with the statement “In general, my junior year prepared me well for a successful internship” (see fig. 2). Clearly, the overall results indicate good things for HTHMA and our efforts to provide for and support the overall educational experience as it relates to internship.
Above: Figure 1—Student responses to “In general, the culture of HTHMA prepared me well for a successful internship.”

Above: Fig. 2—Student responses to “In general, my junior year prepared me well for a successful internship.”
The assignment to interview the students’ mentors was not new for me, but this action research project directed my focus in new ways. This semester, I assigned the mentor interview and then spent three consecutive class periods unpacking the purpose of this assignment. In the past, my purpose had been journalistic, as that is what I had perceived as the focus for my humanities class and the content connection. Now, the purpose was shifted to the students.

As this project began, I was uncertain about the long-range plans for my overall Humanities course. In the hopes to streamline this project, nearly all of my supporting documents were housed online and all of our standards and expectations for quality were worked out as a class. The initial schedule was posted on my Google calendar that I share with students and the initial assignments—to find professional interviews that could serve as exemplars and to post and critique lists of potential interview questions—were posted and completed as blog entries. I did this to ensure student had quick and easy access to my assignments as well as multiple students and professional examples in as few clicks as possible. I also hoped that each aspect of this project and each assignment along the way, would be understood as essential components to a high quality final product—I hoped that the relationships between each assignment and even the manner in which I assigned them—would strike the students as a simple, coherent whole.

After we had begun finding professional interviews that could serve as exemplars and developing questions for the upcoming interview, I asked students to pause the process and respond to the journal prompt "What is the purpose of doing a mentor interview?" Student responses revolved around phrases such as:
"To get to know him/her."

"To learn about this career, my internship, this field of work."

"So they can get to know me."

In neither of my classes did any student volunteer ideas that went significantly further than the three phrases listed above. Based on this, I decided that we should spend time generating more developed, nuanced and multifaceted motivators to do the mentor interview. Over the course of three days, we wrote in journals and discussed in a variety of groups for periods of time ranging from 20 minutes to over an hour. Each time, I asked students to select—or I assigned—key phrases from past conversations for them to unpack, expand or otherwise further develop. At times, I inserted some of my own phrases. For example, when students repeatedly came back to the concepts of "to get to know my mentor" and "for my mentor to get to know me", I suggested the word "relationship" and teased the words "professional", "intellectual", "productive", "intelligent", and related themes from the class through my own questioning. Each day we recorded these thoughts on the whiteboard and each day we managed to cover almost an entire wall of whiteboards in my classroom with evidence of our thoughts.

Through these exercises, we developed new purposes, such as:

"To see different paths my life might take beyond high school."

"To understand different decisions my mentor made in his/her life."

"To develop a professional and intellectual relationship with my mentor."
As the mentor interview concluded, we continued to discuss the results and the changed perspectives. One key insight I attempted to steer my students towards was the understanding that internship gives them a clear opportunity to learn how an educated professional person navigates the complexity of what is truly an at-times-messy and random life. In discussion throughout the first semester and early in the spring cohort’s internship, I found that students thought of internship experiences very literally—for example, if an internship placement was at a site that specifically did the type of work that the student explicitly named as an interest, then that internship was perceived as far more positive than others, regardless of actual work duties, job descriptions or personal relationship at the site. This is similar to how I think many students conceive of the path from the 11th grade into the world as a whole—one that is literal and rational, and marked by clear, conscious choices between discrete alternatives. I thought of the mentor interview as a great place to develop the students’ approach to life as one of an educated person doing the best he or she can in a complex world that depends on personal, economic and geographical relationships. Adults typically do not arrive at a particular career in a specific city because they mapped out a straightforward path when they were in high school (or, at least the adults I know did not!)—instead, they tried their best to make good decisions in a complicated world. I hoped that the mentor interview might encourage the development of a sense of intelligently empathetic personal decision-making.

When I surveyed the entire class at the end of the immersion (approximately four weeks after the interview was completed), I asked them to respond to the statement "The mentor interview was a positive and productive project." I found that 91% of my students agreed while 9% disagreed (see fig. 3).
Above: Fig. 3—Student responses to “The mentor interview was a positive and productive project.”

As the semester progressed, I found myself referring more and more to the mentor interview. I often suggested that students follow up with more questions, that they update their interviews throughout the semester, that they return to their mentor with “better” questions—questions that reflected the students’ new questions about life, education and the larger world beyond school. Some students chose to do this. Probably due to the contrived nature of the student-teacher relationship, students did this most often when grades offered a reward—or, at least I heard about their progress when there were points to be earned. I offered the chance to update mentor interviews on a voluntary basis and I don’t know who did it; I offered the same chance with the opportunity to have the mentor interview re-graded for a possible better score and approximately 15 percent of the class did so. When I reminded the class that the final writing assignments could draw from mentor interviews or feature new interviews of prominent adults at their internships, approximately 20 percent of the class took me up on my offer.
The Photo Essay

Without knowing it, I came close to re-creating a project that has been used throughout the various internship classes held at HTH schools and at the original program taught by Rob Riordan in Cambridge. I began the photo-essay because it was a clear way to bring the internship experience to school. Photography is one of my strengths and interests, and I find it very easy to get students to write about a picture, especially when they took the photographs. My photo-essay project required students to return to school following their internship immersion with five to seven pictures that tell a unique and compelling story. For each picture, each student wrote an informative caption of approximately 150 words that takes the audience deeper into the world of the internship, the photographer, the characters, and/or developed specific themes.

For this project, I created a more traditional one-sheet that prompted the students to begin the project, which I distributed as a hard copy as well as digitally.

In this project we studied journalistic and artistic photo essays as well as writing techniques that could lead to captivating and informative captions that develop a story. We also studied photography techniques and digital photo editing. Before the students left for their immersion, I distributed the Photo Essay project sheet. Students were to return from their two-week internship immersion with five to seven photographs and accompanying captions that worked together as a whole to tell a story, develop a theme or develop a character. This single sheet also listed suggested photo techniques and proposed subjects for their photography. I encouraged my students to carry the sheet with them during their internship immersion in order to seek inspiration for photos (see appendix #7 for the Photo Essay project sheet that was distributed to the class).
Before students left, we revisited an assignment from the previous semester, in which students posted professional, amateur and personal examples of a variety of photographic techniques (this had been a blog assignment supporting a self-portrait assignment in the fall semester). We created an online system for reserving either of the two class cameras and posted this to the class Google calendar.

When students returned from their immersion experience, we critiqued the photos and captions and allowed time to edit and re-take photos as well as edit and rewrite captions for the next two weeks. At the end of the month (this allowed a total of four weeks to work, including the two weeks of immersion), students posted a lengthy blog entry that consisted of their best five to seven photographs with the revised captions. This blog entry was then shared with fellow students as well as adults of the students’ choice within the HTHMA community and their mentors. Everyone was invited to comment on the students’ work online on their blogs. Finally, high-resolution versions of all of the class’ pictures were organized on a hard drive to be saved for later use within the class.

When I surveyed my students during the second semester, I included questions about the photo essay project. Unfortunately, due to the timing of the survey, I asked for their impressions of this project before the project was completed, which is never ideal. Nevertheless, 83% of my students agreed and 17% disagreed that the photo essay was a positive and productive project (see fig. 4). I hypothesize that these results would become more positive if I asked the survey questions after the exhibition of the work, as in my experience student impressions of work tend to become more positive when they can view the results of their efforts, rather than when they
are still within the critique process.

Above: Fig. 4—Student responses to “The photo essay was a positive and productive project.”

Blogging as Writing

I have tried various forms of journals since the first days of my student teaching experiences. I have to admit, I never liked it. I don’t keep a journal for myself. While I enjoyed discussing the daily writing prompts with my students, it felt contrived.

During the fall semester of my class, I instituted a twice-weekly blogging assignment that stretched throughout the entire semester. Blogs provide a number of advantages over traditional journals—they have the allure of technology; they are remarkably easy to edit (a student can post an entry, and log in later and fine tune it); they allow for equal access to all forms of evidence (students post pictures, charts, videos, links to audio, and all sorts of evidence from a variety of sources), there is a seemingly limitless expanse of evidence from which one can draw
inspiration, and it is so easy to teach the importance of citations (if a student reads an interesting idea, they want to keep clicking to find where it came from). During the first semester, blogs typically offered space to reflect, develop new ideas in an easy-to-edit multimedia format, and an ongoing attempt to connect current events to class content.

Since blogs were successful in the first semester, we decided to continue. This time, we used blogs to continue our exploration of the significance of historical, cultural, economic and other ideas in modern society, but also as a space to share ideas and experiences about internship. For example, students used their blogs to list goals for internship, what they hoped to learn about the adult world of work, and what they hope to learn about themselves. Following the first day of internship, students shared simple observations including what happened on their first day, how they got to internship, what they did for lunch, how they got home, and in general how things went.

Eventually, blogs became a place to brainstorm the beginnings of projects that spanned internship and school work—we posted and analyzed examples of professional interviews before conducting our mentor interviews, we posted and analyzed lists of potential questions for our specific interviews, we posted and analyzed “good” professional photography before starting our photo essays, and we posted and critiqued ideas for our contributions to the year-end exhibition-oriented project. We also posted drafts of our work on the blogs and solicited critiques from fellow students. During certain projects, such as the photo essay, we showcased finished work on the blogs and invited adults from the school and larger community to comment online.
The End-of-Year Exhibition

When I first proposed to my classes that we should revisit the best work we had done over the course of the semester, edit and revise to our usual standards for exhibition, and showcase it in some form of new-media venture, I expected that I would be bowled over with enthusiastic cheers. After all, in the previous semester, we had created what I thought was a fantastic interactive website in which the user could navigate through a wide variety of documentary videos, animated photo essays, art and writing. I personally watched students, teachers and parents immerse themselves in the site, as there was simply so much content spread across a variety of media—and students continued to work on the fall project in the spring by their own choice. Based on this, I thought a multimedia project was a wise choice for the spring. We had been successful with this idea once—and because the news during the course of the semester (and a few blog assignments)—explicitly highlighted the so-called death of traditional media, I assumed that students would naturally want to continue working with new media. So, I proposed that we bring in our best work and think of a way to showcase it in a media form best suited for the 21st century. I was met with a room full of bored stares. What was wrong?

In class, students said things like “we’ve already made a website” and “we do stuff like that all the time—can we do something different?” Then came the real kicker, when a student suggested, “can we make a magazine?” Most of the students loved it! Now, ideas were really flying—“let’s make a book!” followed by “let’s make a yearbook of internship stuff,” which morphed back into “let’s make a class magazine.”

The idea of a print publication was the furthest thing from my mind. “Print media?” I said, “You mean, like the kind that is going out of business across the country? The kind that might not even exist anymore when you are out in the ‘real world?’”
But, they loved it. I talked to both of my classes and both came to the same conclusion—we were making a magazine. I was so hesitant to go along, that even as I drafted this very thesis, the word “magazine” was not typed here until early May, when we were only a week away from going to press.

I was hesitant to work on a class publication for a few reasons. First, printing takes time and we didn’t have that much. We would lose at least two weeks of precious time to work while we waited for the magazine to print. Second, printing costs money. We had a few hundred dollars in our class bank account and I knew from experience that high quality printing—especially color pages—could easily cost a few thousand dollars or more, even if we only printed enough copies for each student in the class to take one home. Finally, in the words of Egon Spengler, “print is dead.” Once the files get sent to the printer, we would be stuck forever with whatever we had sent. Our mistakes would be essentially set in stone.

I presented these concerns to my classes, and they shrugged them off as if I was simply afraid of a challenge. Need time? We’ll work twice as fast, they said. Need money? We’ll fund raise after school and sell sponsorships to local businesses. Scared we’ll make mistakes? We’ll draft and revise, we’ll do some form of critique every day, we’ll get the tutors to help, we’ll get more teachers involved, we’ll get our parents to help. What could I say?

I reiterated the initial offer to the students—choose your best work from the course of the semester and use it as the jumping off point for a single piece of writing to showcase in our magazine. Naturally, I hoped my students would develop new ideas, but I was also excited to see that many made legitimate revisions, often synthesizing multiple previous writings to form a new piece far stronger than the sum of it’s parts. Although I had already begun this process, I was pleasantly surprised to read the following in Adria Steinberg’s Real Learning, Real Work: Rob
Riordan contributed a chapter, in which he writes, “Consistent with the precepts of good writing instruction, every piece of writing has a use—or multiple uses. The accumulated shorter writings constitute a resource bank for larger products.” (Riordan & Steinberg, p. 134).

Together, our class brainstormed a list of possible ideas for content, which we left on the white board for almost all of the project as a regular reference and reminder that one idea could continue to change and become another. The list included: editorials, advice to corporate leaders, advice to politicians, advice to parents, advice to students (I was shocked that no one suggested advice to teachers!), interviews (mentors or otherwise), factual articles, personal reflections, creative writing, photo essays and artistic contributions. I believe that writing always serves multiple purposes within a humanities class, and last week’s assignments can often be next week’s inspiration.

As we developed the individual contributions for our magazine, I brought in a local professional writer and editor to critique drafts with students. In this session, students prepared questions and areas of concern in their writing in advance, and then grouped themselves according to similar issues. All of the groupings were done based on personal reflections the students wrote to themselves about their writing. When our local expert entered the room, there was a table of approximately four students who needed help with their introductions, another table of students wanting ideas for conclusions, another needing help with transitions and so on. The professional writer, an academic coach and I spread ourselves throughout the room and then rotated through each table, so that every group got approximately 15 minutes with each of us. As a teacher, I also got to hear from the students in real time what the professional and what the academic coach were saying and doing that was helping them.
Student contributions to the magazine swelled. In the beginning of the project, a student-run editorial board (comprised of honors students and students who volunteered for the additional responsibilities) negotiated a 100-page magazine that would feature two pages submitted from each of our 47 students. By the time we settled on the basic specifications of each student’s submission, we reached 226 pages.

The class nearly unanimously wanted color pages, so they decided on an online, on-demand printer that appeared to generate high quality results at reasonable prices. During this process, I suggested guidelines regarding how to pick a printer. The students eventually chose the same online vendor that I was most interested in, based on online reviews and the endorsement of the HTH art teacher. The students were very excited—photo essays were immediately popular and the buzz was all about how beautiful there work would look in full color—big pictures, two-page spreads, full bleeds—this was going to be a real, professional magazine (although at over 220 pages, I was already calling it a book).

In the weeks leading up to publication, we reflected on the course of the semester. We thought of all of the roles they had fulfilled over the course of semester: student and intern, brothers and sisters, advisor and advisee. We thought of the people they had worked with: teachers and mentors and parents and advisors. And, we thought of the places they had been and things they had done: school and work and play, home and away, and so on. We reflected on the idea that the eleventh grade year incorporates a new world into the ones they already understand. And, thus, we created *Ampersand: the student journal of school & work.*

During the critique process, the permanent nature of print had a significant effect on the students’ motivation. One student exclaimed, “This is going to look so cool! I love having something physical to hold to show what I made!” However, also during the critique process,
many of the editors realized just how much work it takes to produce what they recognized as “high quality” writing. Students were writing and re-writing, new drafts were produced each day, and the amount of copy-edits were astounding. We were far from final drafts—let alone layout—when we realized that we were only days from our deadline.

I put the problem in stark terms on the board. We could plow ahead and do layout in approximately 48 hours, then upload our work to the printer’s site. There was no other way to make our deadline. One student asked, “Can we see what it looks like before they print?” Another asked, “Can we make changes after we send it to the printer?” The answer was “no”—the online printer could not send us proofs and there was no time to order an individual test copy of the book and look it over. The class sat in silence for a few minutes, soaking it in. Finally, I suggested that we look into a local printer. We would get black and white pages at a higher price, but we would get proofs and much faster service, especially because there would be no lag time for shipping. But, an elephant loomed in the room: black and white?

In a lively debate, both sections of my classes dropped the color pages in favor of proofs, which could only be provided by a local printer (proofs allow for last-minute corrections, tests on different types of paper and a chance to see the final product before it goes to print). The winning arguments rested on the idea that this project was about the writing. This was a humanities class, and while the students knew many of us love photography, the reason we had such a substantial book was that they had written and re-written substantial articles. The concept of proofs was alluring—they could see their layouts in actual size on the paper that would be used in the final copy and they could continue with additional layers of edits and revisions. Most students needed almost no convincing that the proof process was simply too good to pass up.
In the end, *Ampersand* appears to be a resounding success. The final book featured over 50 articles, reflections, photo essays, personal narratives, interviews, editorials and creative pieces inspired by their experiences with the adult world (and even a cursory glance at the table of contents quickly establishes that many strayed far from their specific internship site when generating content). Some students chose to refine a specific assignment, such as the mentor interview or photo essay, while others created new writing assignments derived from blogs, based on specific internship experiences or simply from ideas they had while working or even commuting.

On the day the books were delivered, the class was electrified with excitement and the students reverently passed copies from person to person, basking in the glow of the glossy covers and bright white pages. Students carefully looked for their articles, only opening each book slightly, so no pages would be creased before our exhibition. Before we put the copies back in the boxes, students carefully wiped any fingerprints off of the covers and locked the boxes of books in my office.

As the books made their way throughout the HTH Village, numerous examples of feedback from adults indicated what a positive contribution *Ampersand* could be for the school and the HTH Village. Parents and teachers proposed the idea that the entire tenth and eleventh grades read *Ampersand* during the next school year; the CEO of the HTH Village personally ordered 25 copies of the book for his own distribution; numerous teachers in HTHMA requested copies or online access to *Ampersand* for use in their classes and/or advisories.

In a reflection, one student wrote: “It was easy for me to write my article, because of the great internship experience I had. I knew what look I wanted for my layout, and how I wanted the article to sound.”
Students who had clear visions for their final products were only asked to make sure their work was inspired by the adult world and that it met the standards of the adult world. In this sense, a large portion of the class either quickly started on their work or quickly started looking through professional examples for inspiration.

In a reflection, another student wrote: When we first started writing our articles for the magazine, I really had no idea what I wanted to do for my article. I chose to put in my photo essay which was already completed, but then Randy was talking to us about other things we can do that way it could be something new. So that gave me the idea to take parts of my photo essay and parts of my mentor interview and put it together to make my article. I was able to incorporate those two things together but also make something new with it. I was able to change things about it to make a whole new article.”

By going back to the original well of previous writings, numerous students developed very high quality pieces. Looking through Ampersand, I see writings that began as blog entries, articles and photo essays that pull from numerous previous assignments, and material that began in one class session but was revised and refined from the level of an assignment to something that we could exhibit. The previous assignments were all drafts that could be the start of the exhibition pieces (Riordan & Steinberg, 134).

A third student wrote: “What stood out as a good example were my fellow classmates’ articles. By going through them I was able to get lots of good ideas with picture and text placement. It also helped me get creative with my layout so that it stands out more then it did before. [Other student’s] blogs helped me the most because they got their layout plans by looking through other magazines. I tried to make my layout unique while keeping their ideas in mind.”
Critique sessions from other students, professional writers, other teachers, academic coaches and myself were a vital component to this project. At one point, a portion of the class was involved in one level or another of critique every single day. Students would rotate through sessions of work, critique, and reflection as we spiraled towards a final product.

A fourth student wrote: “The quality of my work increased with every time spent on it. What worked very well was all the critiques done on my paper and how much time I actually spent on them. I have had so many critiques and I would change something then people would say to change it again. In the long run it helped me shape my article into a well-written piece. I used a significant amount of my time helping my editor with the layout. We spent a lot of time trying to figure out what worked and what didn't. I was proud of my layout because a lot of people said that the designs were really good.”

We recognized early on that the specific words on the page were not the only component of a professionally produced book or magazine. We brought in additional perspectives via our art teacher, other HTHMA staff, other students and internship mentors who work in graphic design. As a result, we had numerous avenues for students to pursue that suited their strengths.

A fifth student wrote: “After 11th grade I hope to stay with [my internship] and continue my project with them... All of these things are important because it made me once again realize how important this topic is and what kind of affect it’s going to have on Mexico [the recipient of my internship project]. It also helped with my writing. We made the right choice by choosing to make a magazine. I believe that everyone’s article is their best example of work so far.”

This type of comment tells me that this project was successful on many levels—in the students’ personal lives, in the “real world” and in the everyday life of simply trying to help students do well in school.
Academic Content

Academically, my class studied US History from Reconstruction forward in conjunction with selected American literature during the second semester. We had a special focus on economics and labor history, spending more time than I might usually delegate for topics such as the many recessions and depressions in American history as well as an in-depth study of the current economic situation in America and it's parallels to earlier economic events or eras. For me, this new emphasis on economics represented a risk. Personally, I am very interested in politics and public policy, which I have often considered only one step removed from economics (I typically sum up economics as the study of "scarcity" and politics as "who decides who gets what?"). However, I have often thought that politics and economics don't necessarily go over well in high school classes and I have a great deal of internal conflict about bringing this interest too far into the class. While I have found that students are interested in people like Barack Obama or George W. Bush, I have seen them get turned off by politics and economics as well, especially after a certain tipping point regarding time or energy. While teenagers as a group are typically interested in issues of right and wrong, I have seen that politics and economics can be abstract and hard to sustain for the course of a project without the real world experiences of voting, paying taxes or earning a paycheck. After all, I have other interests that relate well to my class in US History and English, such as music, journalism, photography, fine art, creative writing and more—given the openness of HTH, it seems natural to embrace these more creative pursuits.

Nevertheless, since the internship addresses such questions as the students' potential place in the world (the economic concept of "specialization") and the fact these students are
living through historic economic events, with the approval of the students, I decided to maintain
the connection to economics and politics throughout the course of the semester. We did this
through the study of labor history (and it's relation to modern labor issues), historic economic
expansions and contractions (and their relationship to modern economic events), and what
guidance these historic events could provide for modern leaders at all levels of society.

Following the immersion, when I surveyed the students, I asked them to respond to the
following statements with the standard range of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" regarding
the academic content of the class:

I found that 89% of my students agreed with the statement “In Humanities, learning
about the history of “work” in America is a good idea during the internship semester.” In
response to "In Humanities, learning about economics in America is a good idea during the
internship semester,” I found that 93% of the students agreed. This is the first time that I have
asked for specific numerical data regarding my students' impressions of their study of economics
and politics. In the past, I have had students write on year-end reflections that we spent too much
time or energy on these subjects (which was considerably less than what my class has done this
year), yet the context of internships appears to be just right to facilitate a serious study of the
world of economics and politics (see fig. 5 and fig. 6).
Above: Fig. 5—Student responses to "In Humanities, learning about the history of “work” in America is a good idea during the internship semester.”

Above: Fig. 6—Student responses to "In Humanities, learning about economics in America is a good idea during the internship semester.”
The three questions that address how much time and energy were presented as a sequence on the survey and I instructed the students that, in my opinion, logically they should only agree with one of those statements. However, most students answered in agreement with more than one statement. If a student answered by agreeing with all three statements, I excluded their results, as it is logically impossible to simultaneously agree that the class spent just the right amount of time, should spend more time and should spend less time on topics such as economics and politics. Also, not every student answered all of these questions, so the total responses for each question vary slightly. Yet, the relationships between these responses are interesting:

90% of my students agreed with the statement "During the internship semester, my Humanities class spends the RIGHT AMOUNT of time & energy on topics like labor history, economics, and working in America." Of the four students who disagreed that we spent the right amount of time on these topics, two wrote that they wanted more time on these topics (see fig. 7).

87% of my students disagreed with the statement "During the internship semester, I would rather that my Humanities class spends LESS time & energy on topics like labor history, economics, and working in America" (see fig. 8).

Finally 59% agreed and 41% disagreed with the statement "During the internship semester, I would rather that my Humanities class spends MORE time & energy on topics like labor history, economics, and working in America" (see fig. 9)
Above: Fig. 7—Student responses to "During the internship semester, my Humanities class spends the RIGHT AMOUNT of time & energy on topics like labor history, economics, and working in America.”
Above: Fig. 8—Student responses to "During the internship semester, I would rather that my Humanities class spends LESS time & energy on topics like labor history, economics, and working in America."

![Bar chart showing student responses to the survey question.]

Above: Fig. 9—Student responses to "During the internship semester, I would rather that my Humanities class spends MORE time & energy on topics like labor history, economics, and working in America."

These results tell me that the internship is an appropriate context for the study of labor history and economics. The level of students who seek more in terms of studying labor history and economics tells me that there is room to grow, but the significant number of those who are already at their limit must also be considered as a balance to this need. In this sense, I feel that I am close to the appropriate balance, but could do better by providing more structured choices that could productively lead those who crave more of this particular branch of humanities to
more depth of study. At the same time, I believe that could provide structured “jumping-off”
points for students to take economic and political study in a more personal or more creative
direction.

Conclusions

I reflect back to the ideas expressed by a veteran teacher, which is that teaching is
inherently rewarding, which could actually produce a problem for teachers with students on
internship. Teachers may skip over basic questions—those of “am I happy doing this kind of
work? Is this personally rewarding”—because so many of us already have answers for those
questions. The power of internships lies in helping students understand decisions made by adults
in the full complexity of life. Hopefully, internship can help lead students to find people, places
and things they truly love and position themselves so that when life inevitably becomes messy,
the students are supported, comfortable and able to move in a positive direction. Of course, that
is a lofty goal, but internships are the beginning because students do meaningful work in a
professional environment with educated adult mentors who can provide examples of what “real
life” is like.

Teaching & Internship

The most important rule that I discovered during the course of this action research project
is to keep projects simple. A project or school assignment that relates to internship should
encourage the students to bring their internship experiences to school. The assignment itself
should be simple, structured, and open for clearly identified creative pursuits. Projects must be
personalized and play on both the teacher’s strengths and the strengths of the internship.
Peyton’s explanation clarifies what makes a project successful project during internship, "If we're going to have a relationship between internship and school, then we should have more personal projects where we really design the project instead of having this strict rubric of 'this needs to be included' and 'this needs to be included'... If they [teachers] made it more open-ended, I would be a lot more able to be involved.”

Teachers who integrate internship into their classes should begin by knowing that they most likely already do many things that support the internship program. Activities and skills that are considered normal in HTH schools—such as group work, regular presentations, and maintaining proficiency in a variety of computer and software platforms—are sound fundamental elements for any successful internship. From there, teachers should heed the advice of Sarah and develop simple, coherent projects that focus on the very basic elements of good teaching. Simple, limited directions should take precedence over complex instructions. Student-generated, open-ended projects should take precedence over teacher-led end products. Critique should drive assessment and professional standards should generate simple rubrics over other systems. Professionalism, elegance and personalization should be central focus. And, we must return to the simple questions of “does this make me happy?” and not worry nearly as much about complex content-connections.

Humanities classes provide a very logical home for an internship-based curriculum. Within humanities classes, students already read and write, so the tendency may be to assume that a series of reflections, or perhaps a paper about internship, is adequate. However, the more significant impetus for placing internship within the context of humanities is because within the humanities, students are engaging their image of themselves as it relates to world around them. As Rob Riordan notes in Real Learning, Real Work, by Adria Sternberg, all students have
feelings about their role in society, and all have questions about the paths their lives might take—the challenge lies with us, the adults, who must learn to look for these opportunities and take them. Internships provide fantastic “opportunities for students to practice the skills involved in observation, description, speculation and presentation” (Riordan & Steinberg, p. 130).

Whereas this model of students published a newsletter with a variety of forms of writing, photography, and graphics, my students interviewed, blogged, photographed and ultimately created a book. Both ventures are “hands-on humanities” (Riordan & Steinberg, p.130-142). And both stem from students’ active engagement with the real world.

Although I approach this study with the natural bias of a humanities teacher, I believe that any class could provide a basis for a strong school to work relationship. All of disciplines have their fundamental skills, whether it is the analytical powers that drive math and engineering, the rigorous inquiry of the sciences or the perspective found in the arts (and of course all of disciplines thrive when all forms of intelligence are engaged), these fundamental skills could be brought to and from the workplace. What forms of analysis are present at work? Whose perspective is important? What makes people work hard at a particular site? How do you know? How could work be different? How could it better? These questions and many more can be addressed in every class. What is important is that internship serves as the “central text” for a variety of inquiry (Riordan & Steinberg, p. 134).

*The Structure of Internship at HTHMA*
After conversations with HTHMA faculty, it is clear that this school is not planning on developing an internship-specific class for the 2009-2010 school year (other HTH schools have used an internship-specific class in the schedule). Rather, all 11th graders will have their immersion together for three weeks in January with limited internship site visits before immersion begins. Models for student supervision while on immersion are not fully determined. In one scenario, each eleventh grade teacher will supervise a group of approximately 25 students while they are on the internship immersion experience. In another version, each advisor in the school will supervise the four or five juniors in their advisory throughout the internship experience. Hybrid models of interaction between students and teachers are also possible and probably desired.

Beginning with the beginning, one immediate need will be to ensure that all students have an internship placement and that they visit these sites before internship begins. Reflecting on what one teacher explained about the mission of HTH schools to connect with the workplace, and reflecting on what another said about the possibility of bring all teachers in on a school-wide effort to connect the workplace and the adult world to school, advisory appears to be a logical place for many of these conversations. Since each advisor at HTHMA has approximately 4 or 5 eleventh graders, the challenge of ensuring that each student is placed at a high-quality internship is shared with the students’ best interests in mind and the student/teacher ratio at the lowest it could conceivably be at HTHMA. Furthermore, as HTHMA moves to a twice-weekly advisory schedule, internship provides a valuable foundation for curriculum. Hopefully, Ampersand could provide material for reading and discussion. Finally, the internship integration into advisory is a logical manifestation of the Adult World Connect design principle of all HTH schools—by placing this in advisory, a long-term, four year commitment is made that each student will have
at least one high-quality, productive relationship with a college-educated adult outside of the ordinary day-to-day existence as a student.

Within advisory, there are numerous ways in which a teacher could lead a productive class that supports and integrates the internship program. Teachers can begin with journal and role-playing exercises found in *The New Urban High School: A Practitioners Guide*. Depending on the nature of the advisory program, projects such as the mentor interview, the photo essay, and/or blogging as writing could be shared, critiqued or even completed within the context of advisory.

Sarah’s reflections on the simplicity and coherence of her 10th grade academic experience led my reflections on structural elements of 11th grade. HTHMA should make every effort to streamline and simplify the project-planning process for 11th grade teachers. Currently, eleventh grade teachers that share similar students at HTHMA do not share common prep periods. This should be remedied for the next school year to simplify project planning processes and ensure clear communication between teachers that will likely plan projects together.

*Teacher Training*

I believe that teacher training should begin with the idea that the broader elements of HTH schools—such as group work, long term projects, regular presentations to adults and varied audiences, regular use of a variety of technology—are essential elements that lead to successful internships and that these skills represent valid forms of academic integration. And, in turn, successful internships are a crucial element to the overall experience of a student at any HTH school.
During my teacher interviews, I asked teachers what sort of help they would ask for. One said, "I did not like the internship class this year [the internship-specific class at other HTH schools]. It was great at the beginning, and then it became so repetitive, the kids checked out.... If there is going to be increased pressure to connect it [internship to HTH school experiences], then I would like for someone to explicitly show me how to do that, design a curriculum, or do it!"

I asked teachers what type of professional development they would like. One teacher said, “I would like someone to explicitly show me how to do that [connect internship and my class curriculum].” Another teacher said, “design a curriculum.”

I hope that the mentor interview, the photo essay, blogging as writing, and Ampersand provide concrete templates for colleagues to improve upon these ideas and develop their own personal projects. I also hope that in the meetings before the next school year, I am able to share my experiences with new teachers and those seeking additional ideas as we all embark on another “new” internship program.

When I first attempted to create an integrated curricula, I identified “internship” as the variable or the factor outside of my experience and comfort zone. In all other respects, I returned to my strengths, to projects in which I knew the content and the relevant skills very well and projects that played on the better-developed parts of my own personality. Teachers who focus on their strengths will do better than teachers who strive to overcome weakness or compensate for deficiencies. If a teacher believes they must integrate new material and they attempt to do it in a way that is beyond their personal strengths, the result is a mediocre project and often frustrated students. However, if a teacher returns to his or her comfort zone in terms of projects, skills and content knowledge, then they may develop very high quality projects even with the integration of new material. For example, a humanities teacher who does not care for economics might be
much better off having students on internship relate to the conflicts found in great literature—and then the students can author and critique their own stories that draw from internship but place their experiences in the world of classic literature. A student may just as well assess the sustainability of a community health clinic as write about his feelings working with people who are dying—the important part is that his experience is processed deeply (Liesveld & Miller, p. 6-12).

My conversations with teachers led me to believe that many interpreted the call for “integration” to mean literal integration of their subject matter with the internship experience. Projects such as the mentor interview, photojournalism, blogging and media creation and dissemination as well as content such as labor history, economics, cultural studies and many more related humanities ideas can provide a logical start for one teacher in each eleventh grade team. However, a return to the basics and the core HTH ideals can help every teacher understand that integration is happening and how to look for it and further develop it in their own classes.

The level of stress and even confusion among the staff must be addressed and I hope I can help, especially as the internship program continues to grow and change. I believe that the upcoming changes to the internship program provide an excellent opportunity for colleagues to address these issues and clarify their vision for the internship program. I also believe that the upcoming changes in the internship program provide an opportunity for teachers and student with successful projects to come forward and present these to other teachers and students in an attempt to provide clear examples that are ready for use.

In light of the wide variety of plans and visions of integration currently in effect at HTH schools, I believe that the HTH village and/or individual schools must set aside specific time to meet and plan successful projects and orient teachers towards their strengths. As one teacher
commented, this is almost a new class, and as others stated, they need help developing these projects.

**Reflections**

When I began this action research study, I had a few different interests that came together to drive my inquiry. I was interested in the adult world connection at HTH schools, but initially that manifested as literal connections stemming from my projects. When developing research questions, I looked at the projects that I liked and the ones that I thought I would repeat and asked questions based on them—questions such as “what do students communicate about community involvement?” In some ways, I was thinking about service learning, but I wanted to do something different; I felt like the particular projects that provided this inspiration were a step or two removed from traditional concepts of service learning and instead dealt with simply being involved as an active participant in one’s community.

Eventually I started to think about the upcoming school year. I had heard rumors of a new internship program; I began to hear about a proposed immersion in which students would not come to school for two weeks. Eventually, I joined meetings in which new ideas—and a lot of new ideas—about internship came flooding out from across the HTH village. The internship experience was taking on what seemed to be a new level of importance, and I heard the word “integration” a lot!

At the conclusion of the 2007-2008 school year and the beginning of the 2008-2009 year, we had a series of meetings at HTHMA with eleventh grade teachers and various HTH leaders in which we sketched out ideas of what “integration” could look like. We ran through possible project ideas, we talked over academic integration from each teachers’ perspective, we even
planned and critiqued specific assignments from humanities, math, biology and engineering. Some teachers explicitly began preparing their fall curriculum around cross-class integration, with internship as a central focus.

As soon as this process began, two things happened. One was that I recalled a meeting I had with Rob Riordan in the spring of my first year at HTHMA. We were getting ideas together for the first group of students to go through eleventh grade at HTHMA. Rob clearly stated that internship is the central experience of a students’ journey through an HTH school. After two years of teaching eleventh grade here, I now knew that HTHMA would return to Rob’s earlier idea. The second thing that happened was that I realized that I had no idea what I would teach during the internship semester. Once I achieved that realization, my other ideas went out the window and I knew I would research internships.

My initial idea was to go on a sort of “listening tour” and simply collect student impressions of internships. I thought that this would give me a good foundation for developing a curriculum based on when I heard from those actually experiencing various HTH internship-related projects.

I initially proposed that I have a focus group at each HTH high school and hold regular discussions with each group in order to let the best practices rise to the top. While that seemed good at the time, looking back, I realize that what I was designing was essentially a full time job. Even scheduling time with students in the classroom next to mine was remarkably difficult!

When I look back at my calendar for the first semester, I realize that school, graduate school and other events became major obstacles to the time consuming nature of conducting, transcribing and analyzing interviews. For example, the internship immersion for the first semester students was the same two weeks that I needed to use for the production of the HTH
Graduate School journal (I am the editor), as we went to press at the conclusion of the final day of the fall internship immersion. Furthermore, I teach a full load of classes, so getting away from my responsibilities at HTHMA and in the HTH Village proved to be nearly impossible during the first semester immersion. Furthermore, the simple task of ensuring that I had time with another teacher’s students proved to be more difficult that I originally imagined. On-campus interviews worked, but there is a world of difference between these conversations and the close access that I have with my own students.

Working with my own students was so much easier—from getting permission forms in to reading their blogs and listening to them in class, I simply knew so much more. Additionally, after my mistakes in the first semester, I scheduled the second semester’s immersion so that I could visit nearly every single student at their internship site.

The general idea of observing the first semester of internship and then teaching my own class worked extraordinarily well. I did see, in a macro sense, what worked and what did not. I came to my first major conclusion (“when in doubt, simplify!”) approximately mid-way through the semester, as soon as I started to hear the real details of what the students were doing in each class.

In one sense, I had a large advantage over Humanities teachers who had their students go on their internship during the first semester: by going second, I was able to align a fairly traditional approach to Humanities content knowledge with the students' chronological experiences. In my class, this meant that in the first semester, we studied early American history in the context of it's own projects. By the time we reached second semester—and the students' internship experience—historically we were in the late 1800's. We have studied the late 1800's and 20th century through the lens of labor and economics in America, which provides for
seemingly infinite natural connections between history content and the students' lives as interns. Furthermore, we have used the lens of current events for the entire year—from the study of America's founding documents in August to the 20th century, all historical knowledge is put in the context of current events.

In the past, I have approached history in many different ways—backwards, forwards and thematically. As a result of these experiences, and in the face of the new challenge of integrating the internship experience into my class, I determined early on that I would approach history in the simplest, most straightforward manner imaginable: linearly, but always with the question of how is this relevant today? In the second semester, while students are on internship, it is now very easy to find natural connections between, say, for example, the Great Depression, current political and economic events and issues at the students’ internship.

In conducting this research study, the second half was so much easier than the first half. The close connection I had with my students and the direct personal experiences with my own curriculum and classes on a daily basis made it far easier to engage in the cycles of action research. Furthermore, I used faster methods of data collection—the survey. In a matter of minutes, I had a general idea of almost 50 students’ opinions on a wide variety of questions. While personal interviews certainly offer a much more detailed and specific view of an individual student, I could check my idea of the big picture against the snapshot that the survey provided, and I could do it all in one afternoon with my computer.

This simple approach—and the obvious content connections to internship—helped me be far more flexible as a teacher. I was able to focus on new ideas because my own need to know “what am I going to teach?”, “what reading material do the students need?” and so on were easily satisfied.
I will admit that I was very concerned as I started the second semester. I had thoughts of "What projects can I do?"; "What can I exhibit at the end of the year?"; "What resources will I use?"; "What will the kids read?"; "Is it okay to not think about internship all the time?"; "What about the other projects that students and teachers want to do?"; "Can I do an integrated project with other teachers if I'm thinking about internship, labor history, economics and so on all semester?"

Now that we are at the end of the semester, I feel very good about what we accomplished. I actually feel more settled and confident in this curriculum than in many of the other projects and curricula I have developed. While I do have my stock projects that I might return to in the non-internship semester, I don't really like to do that. Yet, in the internship semester, I have to say that I am very happy with the results from the mentor interviews, the photo essays, the numerous blogs that we wrote about related topics and Ampersand. At this point it is almost hard to believe that I was so concerned about how internship would fit into my second semester. Now, looking at how the pieces fit together, I feel like I completed a puzzle or built something—when I view the whole item, it seems so logical and even simple. The next steps for next year are clearly to return to the core vision of documenting the students’ internship experiences and use that material as the springboard into a large-scale system of projects and curricula at school.

On the same day that I wrote an initial draft of this section of my thesis, the Ampersand cover crew was proposing a design to the class as a whole. Along the spine, they had written “Volume One.” When I gave them a quick little look, the head designer said, “What? You’re going to do this again next year, right?”
Appendix 1—Letter to Parents

Letter Requesting Permission to Participate in an Action Research Study
June 10, 2008

Dear Parent,

In addition to being a teacher at High Tech High Media Arts, I am also a student in the HTH Graduate School of Education Teacher Leadership Master’s Program. As part of this program, I will be conducting a research study to learn more about the role of your internship in your academic experience at HTH schools. I'll be working with many students and teachers at different HTH schools and would like to invite you to be a part of my research. Below is some information to help you make an informed decision:

Why I’m doing this study: I am really interested in learning more about your experiences as part of the HTH internship program. My goal after my research is document what students communicate about their internships so that teachers and students can work together to create improved authentic curricula that better supports students’ connections with the world outside of school.

What will happen to you if your son/daughter is in the study? If your son/daughter participates in this study I'll ask him/her to complete a survey. I may possibly ask him/her for further information, which could include meeting for one-on-one interviews, participating in a focus group with other students to discuss internships, and allowing me to read sections of his/her journal related to internships (the student would select these sections). During interviews and focus groups, I will audio or videotape our conversations.

Are there any benefits or drawbacks of being involved? This study won't harm your son/daughter in any way, and it may not directly help him/her either. However, this study will provide a chance for students to think and talk about their experiences at your internship. If you choose to allow your son/daughter participate or not, there will be no effect on his/her grades or any other aspect of your experience at school. Your opinions will be useful to me to better integrate the internship into the academic experience at school.

Who will know who is in the study? I'm going to keep whatever I hear from each student separate from what I hear from other people—other students or other teachers. I won't tell them what your son/daughter tells me, and I won't tell your son/daughter what they tell me. However, I will write an article or report based on the interesting things I will learn in this study. I will also present what I've learned at conferences so that it can be useful to other teachers. In either case, I will conceal your son’s/daughter’s name so that no one will know who your son/daughter is, or that your son/daughter did or said a particular thing.

Does anyone have to be in the study? No, no one has to be in this study. Just tell me if you don’t want your son or daughter to be in the study. And remember, students can change their mind and opt out at any time.

Questions? You can ask questions at any time. You can talk to me or you can talk to your child
about this study at any time. My work telephone and e-mail are:

**PH:** 619-920-3356 **E-mail:** rscherer@hightechhigh.org

In you have concerns about this research, you can also contact my advisor, Rob Riordan, Ed.D., who will be supervising this research:

**PH:** 619-929-9748 **E-mail:** rriordan@hightechhigh.org

To go ahead with this study, I need to know that you are willing to participate and that your choice to do so is entirely voluntary. Please review your rights at the bottom of this page and sign below if you agree to participate.

Sincerely,

Randy Scherer

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**IF YOU AGREE TO BE IN THE STUDY, PLEASE SIGN YOUR NAME BELOW**

Signature of the Parent ___________________________ Date ________________
Signature of the Teacher Researcher ___________________ Date __________________

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As a research subject, you have the following rights:

1) To be told what area, subject, or issue is being studied.
2) To be told what will happen to you and what the procedures are.
3) To be told about the potential risks or discomforts, if any, of the research.
4) To be told if you can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefit might be.
5) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study, both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
6) To refuse to participate in the study or to stop participating after the study starts.
7) To be free of pressure when considering whether you wish to be in the study.
Appendix 2—Letter to Students

Letter Requesting Permission to Participate in an Action Research Study

June 10, 2008

Dear Student,

In addition to being a teacher at High Tech High Media Arts, I am also a student in the HTH Graduate School of Education Teacher Leadership Master’s Program. As part of this program, I will be conducting a research study to learn more about the role of your internship in your academic experience at HTH schools. I'll be working with many students and teachers at different HTH schools and would like to invite you to be a part of my research. Below is some information to help you make an informed decision:

**Why I'm doing this study:** I am really interested in learning more about your experiences as part of the HTH internship program. My goal after my research is document what students communicate about their internships so that teachers and students can work together to create improved authentic curricula that better supports students’ connections with the world outside of school.

**What will happen to you if you are in the study?** If you participate in this study I'll ask you to complete a survey. I may possibly ask you for further information, which could include meeting for one-on-one interviews, participating in a focus group with other students to discuss internships, and allowing me to read sections of your journal related to your internship (you would select these sections). During interviews and focus groups, I will audio or videotape our conversations.

**Are there any benefits or drawbacks of being involved?** This study won't harm you in any way, and it may not directly help you either. However, this study will provide a chance for you to think and talk about your experiences at your internship. If you choose to participate or not, there will be no effect on your grades or any other aspect of your experience at school. Your opinions will be useful to me to better integrate the internship into the academic experience at school.

**Who will know that you are in the study?** I'm going to keep whatever I hear from you separate from what I hear from other people—other students or other teachers. I won't tell them what you tell me, and I won't tell you what they tell me. However, I will write an article or report based on the interesting things I will learn in this study. I will also present what I’ve learned at conferences so that it can be useful to other teachers. In either case, I will conceal your name so that no one will know who you are, or that you did or said a particular thing.

**Do you have to be in the study?** No, you don’t. No one will get angry or upset with you if you don’t want to do this. Just tell me if you don’t want to be in the study. And remember, you can change your mind later if you decide you don’t want to be in the study anymore.

**Questions?** You can ask questions at any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can
talk to me about this study at any time. My work telephone and e-mail are:

**PH:** 619-920-3356  **E-mail:** rscherer@hightechhigh.org

In you have concerns about this research, you can also contact my advisor, Rob Riordan, Ed.D., who will be supervising this research:

**PH:** 619-929-9748  **E-mail:** rriordan@hightechhigh.org

To go ahead with this study, I need to know that you are willing to participate and that your choice to do so is entirely voluntary. Please review your rights at the bottom of this page and sign below if you agree to participate.

Sincerely,

Randy Scherer

**IF YOU AGREE TO BE IN THE STUDY, PLEASE SIGN YOUR NAME BELOW**

Signature of the Student ___________________________ Date ________________
Signature of the Teacher Researcher _________________________ Date________________

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As a research subject, you have the following rights:

1) To be told what area, subject, or issue is being studied.
2) To be told what will happen to you and what the procedures are.
3) To be told about the potential risks or discomforts, if any, of the research.
4) To be told if you can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefit might be.
5) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study, both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
6) To refuse to participate in the study or to stop participating after the study starts.
7) To be free of pressure when considering whether you wish to be in the study.
Appendix 3—Sample Screening Interview Questions

I prefer to work with open-ended questions that are intended to generate a natural conversation with the students. One concern of mine was to avoid any temptation to frame concepts, suggest phrasings or otherwise bias the results of the interview. My goal was to encourage students to freely and naturally express themselves and describe their internship and the accompanying academic experiences in their own language.

1. Describe your interest (or lack thereof) in participating in a teacher's action research project regarding internships.

2. What are your thoughts regarding post-high school plans?

3. Describe how you feel about your upcoming internship.

4. What expectations do you have for the upcoming semester?
Appendix 4—Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group: Students who have been identified through the preliminary survey and screening interviews as representative of the fall cohort of HTH interns. The focus groups should range from two to five students—enough to bounce ideas around but not too many that some students could get lost in the shuffle.

Focus Group Purpose: To discuss the current internship experiences…

Focus Group Ground Guidelines:

Ten Ideas to Have a Productive Focus Group.

1. This Focus Group will engage in a conversation that is best characterized by dialogue. Our goal is to hear your ideas and opinions in a calm, respectful environment.

2. Speak when you feel comfortable, but be aware that sometimes the moderator(s) may ask to hear your opinion on a particular topic.

3. It’s okay to “pass” when asked to contribute.

4. Do not stay confused; ask for clarification.

5. Talk to each other, not just the moderator(s).

6. Although we will avoid debate, it is okay to disagree. If you disagree with an idea, please try to explain what parts of the idea or topic causes you to disagree.

7. If you agree with idea, try to communicate the reasons for your agreement and how your own experiences coincide with the original idea.

8. If you feel that you are a person who normally “steps up”, it’s okay to sometimes step back.

9. If you feel that you are a person who normally “sits back,” it’s okay to step up.

10. If you have a question—ask!
Appendix 5—Sample Interview Questions

I prefer to work with open-ended questions that are intended to generate a natural conversation with the students. One concern of mine was to avoid any temptation to frame concepts, suggest phrasings or otherwise bias the results of the interview. My goal was to encourage students to freely and naturally express themselves and describe their internship and the accompanying academic experiences in their own language.

As the semester progressed, my questions changed dramatically. Often, the questions were specific to the natural ebb and flow of class or to the specific student.
1. Tell me about your internship.
2. What did you do today at your internship?
3. What is your mentor like?
4. What do you think the purpose is for your internship?
5. What do you expect to do tomorrow/next week at your internship?
6. If school and internship were two people in a relationship, what would that relationship be like?
7. If you were a relationship counselor and school and internship (extending the metaphor from the previous question) walked into your office, what would you tell them in order to help their relationship?
8. What are your thoughts about life after high school?
9. Tell me about a successful project or assignment that brought school and internship together.
10. What advice do you have for HTHMA staff to make the internship experience better?
### Appendix 6—Spring 2009 Class Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, the culture of HTHMA prepared me well for a successful internship.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In general, my junior year prepared me well for a successful internship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In general, I would like to see a closer, more direct relationship between projects at school and my internship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like more separation between projects at school and my internship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think the relationship between projects at school and my internship is just right.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In general, 11th grade Humanities assignments challenged me positively &amp; productively to think deeply about my internship.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In general my 11th grade humanities curriculum works well with my internship experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Humanities, learning about the history of “work” in America is a good idea during the internship semester.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Humanities, learning about economics in America is a good idea during the internship semester.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My mentor interview was a positive &amp; productive project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My internship photo-essay is a positive &amp; productive project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Humanities, we wrote about our internship (too much, just right, not enough, never).</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the internship semester, my Humanities class spends the RIGHT AMOUNT of time &amp; energy on topics like labor history, economics, and working in America.</td>
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<tr>
<td>During the internship semester, I would rather that my Humanities class spends LESS time &amp; energy on topics like labor history, economics, and working in America.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the internship semester, I would rather that my Humanities class spends MORE time &amp; energy on topics like labor history, economics, and working in America.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What skills did we help you develop at school that transferred well to internship?

What skills do we need to help you develop at school to do better at internship?
Appendix 7—The Photo Essay Project Sheet

What stories do I see at my internship? An Internship Immersion Photo-Essay

To complete this photo essay, you must return to school with 5 to 7 photographs and accompanying captions that tell a unique and compelling story inspired by your immersion experience.

Create photo-assignments for yourself by combining different elements from the following lists & categories. There is no limit to the number of elements from each category that you pick and you may certainly add or create any new ones that suit your creative vision.

Suggested Techniques

- Rule of Thirds
- Backlighting
- Side-lighting
- Reflected light
- “Rembrandt lighting”
- Vignetting
- Texture
- Overexposure & underexposure
- Foreground & background
- Candid photojournalism
- Posed portraits
- Reflections
- Macro photography
- Unique perspectives
- Focus? Unfocus? Defocus?
- Bokeh
- Movement
- Slow shutter speed
- Depth of field (Shallow? Wide?)
- Contrast
- Polarization and/or filtering

Possible Subjects

- You
- Your mentor
- Co-workers
- Heavy equipment
- Architecture
- Technology (old & new)
- Human resources
- Natural resources
- Our economic footprint
- Culture
- Action
- Natural Life
- Work, Projects, Productivity
- What else can you think of?

Every photograph will be accompanied by a caption of approximately 150 to 200 words (give or take a few). Captions should expand the audiences’ understanding of your overall ideas, taking them further into the world of the photographer and the photograph. Captions might include quotes, evidence, dialogue and more.

Your photographs and captions must work together to tell a story and develop a theme. Choose your photographs & words wisely!

You may shoot in black & white, color or both. You may digitally and/or artistically alter your photographs. If you are using a digital camera, please use one that is 5 megapixels or greater.

All photographs and captions must be in school in digital draft-form ready for critique on Tuesday, March 17. Please bring all images to school at their full, native resolution. All photographs must be turned in as high quality jpg’s or png’s at 300 dpi with no perceivable, unintentional pixilation at a reasonable print size. If you are unsure how to accomplish this, take pictures at the highest resolution possible on your camera and simply bring these raw, unedited images to school on 3/17—We will handle all technical specifications in class.

Your final photographs & captions are due on March 26.
Appendix 8—Ampersand: The student journal of school & work

See accompanying book or visit Ampersand online at:

http://students.hthma.hightechhigh.org/~mediaarts/ampersand/
References


