


# Summary of Principal Findings: Report on Questionnaires Administered in 1982 to New Haven Teachers



## Background

In 1982 the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute undertook a comprehensive examination of its program. We solicited detailed opinions of the Institute, as well as background information, from all New Haven teachers—Fellows and non-Fellows, those who have used Institute curriculum units and those who have not. We wanted especially to examine the Institute's impact on teachers' learning and morale, as well as students' learning, and to investigate whether unit use depends on the user having been a Fellow.

We developed two questionnaires for the purposes of the study: one for teachers who have not been Institute Fellows, but may have used Institute units, and one for Fellows. The inclusion of non-Fellows provided a valuable control group; also, we hoped to learn more about teachers who have not yet participated in the Institute so that we could better serve them.

The response rate was high. Fifty-seven percent of non-Fellows (183 teachers) and 75% of Fellows (83 teachers) completed questionnaires, yielding a total sample of 266 teachers. No discernible bias was found in the response rate; the sample is representative of both Fellows and non-Fellows.

After analyzing the data, we prepared three reports: one on teachers in the humanities, a second on teachers in the sciences, and a third on the combined samples. The information presented here is drawn from the responses of teachers in both the humanities and the sciences.

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This summary was adapted with the assistance of James B. Saakvitne from reports prepared by Mitchell Katz.

## **Demographic Information**

Fellows and non-Fellows do not look significantly different on basic demographic variables: sex, age, years teaching in New Haven, years in teaching profession, grades taught, subjects taught, education level, and college or graduate-school major. This similarity indicates that the Institute has recruited a representative group of New Haven teachers, consistent with its aim of working with all New Haven teachers without regard to previous academic background or other factors.

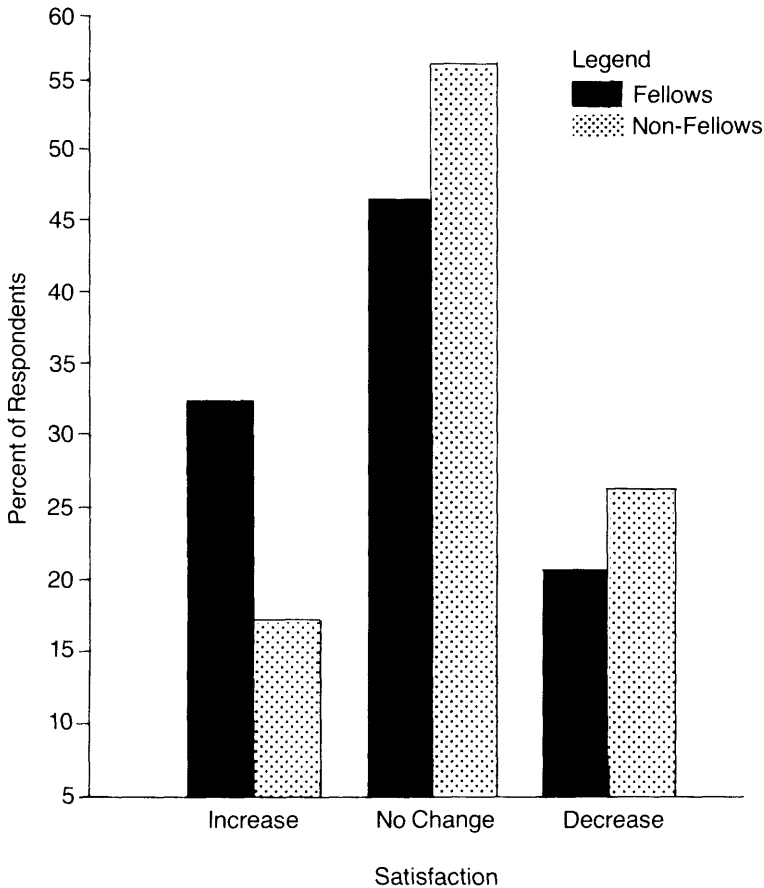
During the past four years, 50.5% of New Haven teachers have taught subjects in which they did not major in college or graduate school (41.2% in the humanities, and 63.7% in the sciences). This finding points up the importance of the additional academic preparation the Institute provides. Almost half of the Fellows report that their participation in the Institute increased their knowledge of their discipline “a lot.” About half of the Fellows (46.7%) view their participation in the Institute as more relevant to their teaching, more important to their professional growth (55.4%), and more rigorous than their teacher preparation classes.

The study documented that the Institute assists teachers with writing. Seventy-five percent report that the process of writing a unit improved their own writing. Sixty-two percent of the Fellows report that the process of writing a unit improved their teaching of writing in school courses.

## **Teacher Morale**

The issue of teacher morale has received extensive attention in both popular and scholarly literature, and the Institute has been especially concerned with the revitalization of teachers. Over one-quarter of the teachers report an increase in the stress they experienced on their job during the last five years. Yet, Institute Fellows are about twice as likely as non-Fellows to report an increase in their satisfaction as teachers during the same period (32.5% versus 17.4%; see Figure 1). The process of actually teaching Institute units may be similarly rewarding. Over half of the Fellows report that Institute units are more enjoyable to teach than curricula they have prepared in other programs or on their own. Also, over half of the Fellows and almost half of the non-Fellows report that Institute units by other teachers are more enjoyable to teach than commercially prepared curriculum materials. Almost half of the Fellows indicate that the opportunity to participate in the Institute has influenced their decision to continue teaching in the New Haven Public Schools (47.5%).

The relationship between teacher expectations and student performance is well-established. The study showed that Fellows are nearly twice as



**Figure 1. Respondents' Reports of Changes in their Satisfaction as Teachers During the Last Five Years.**

likely as non-Fellows to report an increase during the last five years in their expectations of their students (23.9% versus 13.1%; see Figure 2).

### **Student Performance**

We asked teachers to rate student response to Institute units. By having teachers compare student response to Institute units with student response to other curricula they have prepared, we were able to control for a teacher's tendency to report lower or higher student response than is in fact the case. We investigated student attention, interest, motivation, and

mastery. The results generally substantiate the positive impact the Institute has had on student performance. Nearly half of the Fellows report their Institute units resulted in higher student attention, interest, motivation, and mastery than have other curricula they have prepared. Both Fellows and non-Fellows also report similar success with Institute units by other teachers, as compared with commercially-prepared curricula they have used. For each student behavior examined many teachers report higher student response, and no teacher compares the units unfavorably with commercial materials. Because Fellows and non-Fellows report similar levels of success with Institute units by other teachers, the usefulness of Institute units does not appear to depend on a teacher having been an Institute Fellow.

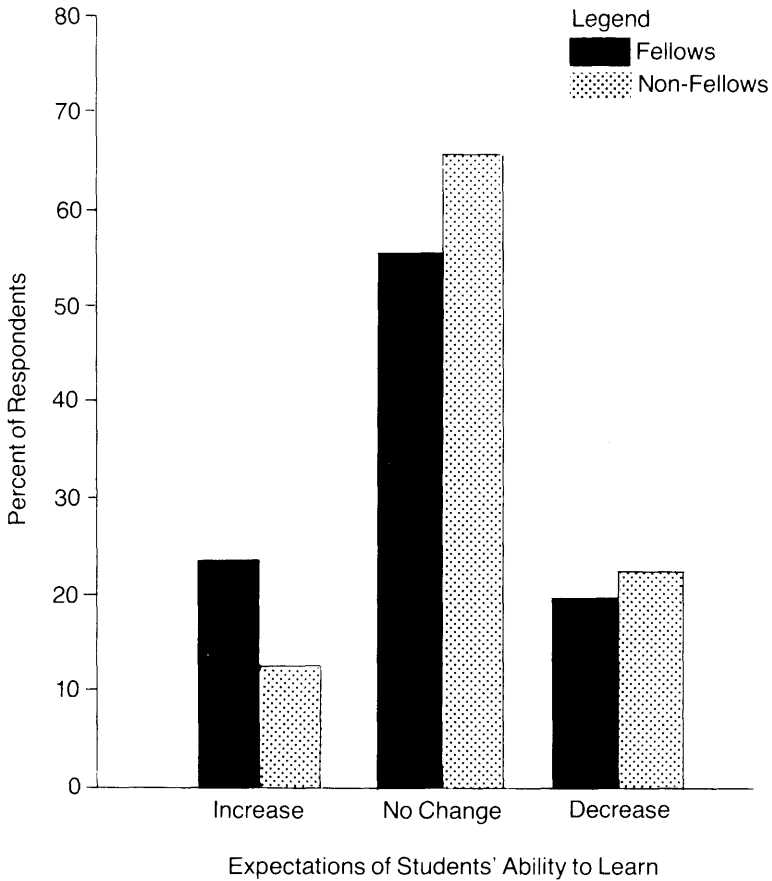
Over 50% of the Fellows report that their units have been successful with the least advanced students. Sixty percent report them to be successful with advanced students, and 70% report them to be successful with average students. Consistent with a central aim of the Institute, the units teachers write appear to serve all students, not just those already successful in school.

### **Use of Institute Curriculum Units**

On the average, Fellows have used a total of 3.0 units and non-Fellows .9 units. Because the program in the humanities has existed for a longer time and has produced many more units than the science program, Fellows and non-Fellows in the humanities generally report using more units. Over 60% of all Fellows have used another author's unit, and 40% of the non-Fellows have used at least one unit. Nearly two-thirds of the Fellows report that the Institute has had a large impact on their teaching curriculum. Over 75% of the Fellows agree that the Institute's interdisciplinary approach has broadened their teaching curriculum, and that the Institute has contributed in a positive fashion to the curriculum of the New Haven schools.

Over 90% of the Fellows report that their own Institute units are adaptable to grade levels other than the intended one(s). Similarly, over 85% of the Fellows and non-Fellows report that Institute units by other teachers are adaptable to other grade levels.

The questionnaire also investigated what prompted teachers to use Institute units and whom they sought out for help in using the units. About half of the Fellows and one-third of the non-Fellows were prompted to use units by their authors, and a similar percentage asked the authors for help with the units. These results demonstrate the important role of the author in promoting unit use. System-wide in-service workshops are also important in promoting unit use. Eighty percent of the Fellows and 40% of the

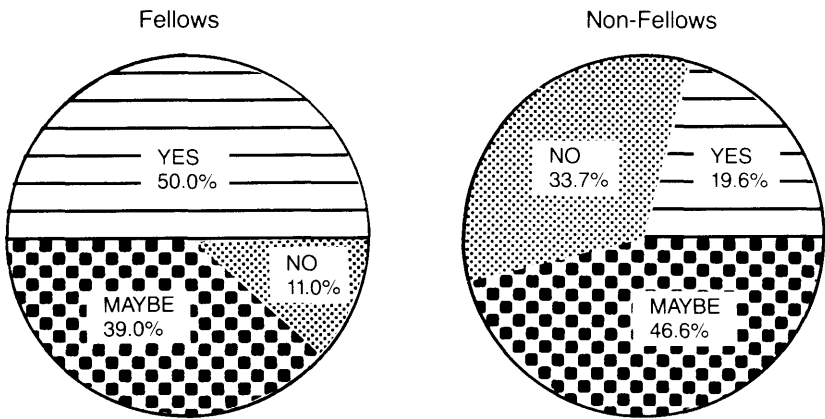


**Figure 2. Respondents' Reports of Changes During the Last Five Years in their Expectations of their Student's Ability to Learn.**

non-Fellows have attended at least one workshop where Institute units were presented. Over 80% of Fellows and one-half of non-Fellows report that they have incorporated material from these workshops in their own teaching.

### Recurring Participation

The Institute seeks to involve teachers on a recurring basis. The questionnaire results document the value of a teacher participating more than once. The more times Fellows had participated the more likely they were to report a large increase in their knowledge of their subject, more enjoy-



**Figure 3. Intention to Participate as a Fellow of the Teachers Institute in the Future.**

ment teaching units by other Fellows, higher student motivation for their own units, and higher student attention, motivation, and mastery of other teachers' units. They were more likely to say that writing a unit improved their teaching of writing, and more likely to agree strongly that the Institute has had a large impact on their teaching curriculum, and has broadened it. Two-thirds of non-Fellows will consider participating in the Institute in the future. Only 11% of Fellows do not intend to participate again (see Figure 3).