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ABILITY GROUPING IN A COLLEGE CHEMISTRY LABORATORY COURSE

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ABILITY GROUPING IN A COLLEGE CHEMISTRY LABORATORY COURSE

by

Rebecca Anne Chambers

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

1985
STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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SIGNED: Rebecca Anne Chambers

APPROVAL BY THESIS DIRECTOR

This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

W. T. Lippincott
Professor of Chemistry

24 July 1985
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

In the vast majority of introductory college chemistry laboratory courses no provisions are made for the differences in the abilities of the students.

In this work the effectiveness of an ability grouped program at the University of Arizona Department of Chemistry was studied. The work consisted of two separate studies. The first study compared post-test scores and grade distributions over the six year history of the course Chemistry 104a. The second study was a more in depth study of two groups of students enrolled in the course during the Fall semester of 1983.

This study was designed to offer some insight into three areas. The first area was a question of the effectiveness of the program in achieving its goals and the second and third areas dealt with possible changes in the program.

The results of the studies were rather inconclusive, owing to the available data and the time frame involved in the experiment. In general, this study seemed to indicate that the weaker group did not exhibit the same level of achievement as the stronger group at the end of the course. It is, however, not possible from this study to determine to what extent, if any, the program is affecting the performance of either group.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Every fall, approximately 1500 students enroll in Chemistry 104a, an introductory chemistry laboratory course, at the University of Arizona. These students have widely varying backgrounds with respect to their chemistry and mathematics levels. When the students were assigned to sections of the course without regard to their individual levels of preparation for taking the course, several problems resulted.

First, most of the instructors did not have a background in education, and found it difficult and frustrating to deal with such a divergent group of students. Secondly, the situation was also very frustrating for many of the students. Those who were well prepared to take the course were often bored and frustrated by the slow pace of the course. The less prepared students were also often frustrated because the instructors did not have the time to address these students' deficiencies. All in all, it was felt that the needs of the students were not being adequately met.

As a remedy to these problems, it was decided to create an ability grouped system for the course. It was hoped that by ability grouping the students, the course would be able to serve the needs of
the students more effectively. The well prepared students would not be frustrated by the less prepared students' deficiencies and the instructors of the less prepared students would be able to spend more time teaching the students the skills they lacked to succeed in a non-ability grouped course. One goal of the system was to help the less prepared students overcome their deficiencies so that at the end of the course, they would have attained the same level of achievement in the course as the well prepared students.

The students were grouped on the basis of their performance on a 15 minute pre-test administered during the first class meeting. All students' scores for that class meeting time were pooled, and the upper half was designated as Track A, while the lower half was designated as Track B. The students were then assigned to their respective laboratory sections.

The Track A students received a standard first semester laboratory program, while the Track B students were given an introductory exercise the first week, and supplemental material for the first half of the course. The Track B instructors were also instructed to spend more time explaining the chemical concepts and the mathematical operations involved in the course. Recently, the supplemental materials have been replaced with a more detailed laboratory textbook. At the end of the course, all students completing the course were given a 15 minute post-test designed to assess their level of achievement and compare different sections of the course. On the basis of the test results.
instructors were advised about the approximate numbers of A and B grades they should give, although instructors were allowed to set their own grading scales. Any significant deviation from the suggested numbers of A and B grades was to be discussed with the laboratory coordinator for approval.

Ability grouping minimized a number of the problems it was designed to address. Since the system had been used for approximately six years, it was decided to attempt a quantitative evaluation of its progress. My project was designed to determine the effectiveness of ability grouping on bringing about a convergence of skill development in an introductory college chemistry laboratory course. We felt this study was important in the determination of the future directions for the program. The questions to be addressed by this study were (1) was the program achieving one of its goals of bring the less prepared students' level of achievement up to the level of the well prepared students, (2) if so, could the program be improved to increase the level of achievement of all students, and (3) if the program is not achieving this goal, how can it be revised to move in this direction?

While there is a large body of literature concerned with ability grouping on the elementary level in reading and language arts, a thorough search of the literature revealed almost no studies on ability grouping at the post secondary level. Indeed, only one paper, by Smithson, was found (1). This study concerned itself with the effects of ability grouping on the performance of college physics students. His
results indicate that ability grouping does not significantly affect the performance of the higher ability students; they do as well in nongrouped sections as they do in grouped sections. However, poorer ability students perform at a higher level when placed in nongrouped sections.

A study on secondary students, done by Plewes in Luxembourg, indicates that ability grouping does indeed increase the performance of all students (2). Unfortunately, in this study the teaching methods employed for the two groups differed significantly. The mixed ability groups received self-paced, non-teacher centered instruction, while the ability grouped students received whole-group, teacher-centered instruction. Due to these differences, it may be difficult to determine which variable is primarily responsible for the author's results.

This lack of previous research makes this study even more important as a trailblazer.

Research Procedure

This project consisted of two separate studies. The first study was an analysis of the data, collected over the years, on the results of the tracking program. The second study was a direct comparison of two sets of students, one from each track.

In the first, or long term, study the various sets of information collected over the approximately six years of the program was analyzed to determine if any patterns in student achievement could be found. This data was collected over the years by the laboratory coordinator, and consisted of post-test results and grade distributions.
The second, or short term, study compared the scores of two
groups of students, one from each track, to determine if the two groups
showed the same level of achievement at the end of the course.

The two groups chosen were selected on the basis of (1) the time
the section met, and (2) the characteristics of the instructors
involved. The times chosen were Tuesday and Thursday 8:00 - 10:50 A.M.,
and Thursday 11:00 A.M. - 1:50 P.M. These times traditionally attract
the more motivated students, and the students in these sections are
usually the typical college students in terms of age and goals. The
instructors were chosen on the basis of the characteristics of their
teaching styles. All of the instructors chosen were demonstrably
concerned with the education of their students, and all had similar
teaching styles.

In total, the test group consisted of 103 students, 40
from Track A, and 63 from Track B. These students were given a common
final examination, written by the instructors and me, and graded by me.
The scores on this test and the standard post-test were analyzed to
determine if there was a significant difference between the level of
achievement of the two groups by the end of the semester.

The statistical analysis on this data consisted of a standard
t-test of the means, using a 0.05 level of significance. The formula
use to compute t was:

\[ t = \frac{(\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2) - d_0}{S_p \sqrt{\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}}} \]
where $\chi_i =$ mean of sample $i$

$d_0 =$ desired difference between means

$$Sp = \left( \frac{(n_1-1)s_1^2 + (n_2-1)s_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2} \right)^{1/2}$$

$n_i =$ # of measurements in sample $i$

$S_i =$ standard deviation of sample $i$ (3)

The 0.05 level of significance means that the probability of committing a Type I error (rejecting a null hypothesis that should be accepted) is 0.05.
CHAPTER 2

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Long-term Study

Comparison and Interpretation of Post-test Scores (1977-1983)

The averages of both Tracks' scores can be found in Table 1. From this table, we can see that although there is always a difference between the Track A and the Track B scores, with the Track A students scoring higher, this difference seems to be generally increasing. No satisfactory explanation presents itself to account for the decrease in the difference for the Fall, 1983 scores.

A more striking result of this data is the overall drop in performance of the Track A students of 8.1 points, while the Track B students scores dropped 11.6 points. This may indicate that recent Track A and B students are less prepared to take the course than their predecessors had been. Of the two groups, the Track B students are even less prepared. This result also might indicate a drop in instructor expectations or teaching effectiveness. The available data offers no way to distinguish between these interpretations.

Other information, such as the overall performance of the students in the general chemistry program, and the extensive evaluation of instructors by staff and students suggests that neither
Table 1 - Comparison of Post-test Results (1977-1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Track A%</th>
<th>Track B%</th>
<th>Δ%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>73.5</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
interpretation is correct. A more plausible explanation is that the difficulty of the test varied from year to year. Normalizing the results produces the figures in Table 1b.

Comparison and Interpretation of Grade Distributions (1980-1983)

Three different analyses of grade distributions were made in this study, and the results of are in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

The first of these comparisons, that of overall grade distributions, can be found in Table 2. This is not a very useful comparison tool. The overall distribution of grades is determined by the chemistry department based on examination scores, lab reports, and a standard developed over years of experience.

A more relevant comparison of grades can be found in Table 3, the comparison of grades awarded by Track. In this table, we see that a higher percentage of Track A students receive grades of A and B than do the Track B students. This, of course, means that a higher percentage of Track B students receive grades of C, D, or E. This would appear to indicate that overall, Track A students achieve on a higher level than do Track B students.

The most striking comparison of grade distributions is found in Table 4. This compares the percentage of each grade received by each Track, or what percentage of a particular grade was earned by either Track. It can be seen from this data, that over the years, the
Table 1b - Comparison of Normalized Post-Test Results (1979-1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Track A%</th>
<th>Track B%</th>
<th>Δ%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 - Overall Grade Distributions (%) (1978-1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>W</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/V = not valid due to building remodeling
Table 3 - Comparison of Grades Awarded by Track (%) (1980-1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>W</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>23.7/16.1</td>
<td>29.4/27.8</td>
<td>19.4/20.9</td>
<td>2.4/3.9</td>
<td>5.7/6.2</td>
<td>0.24/0.25</td>
<td>19.0/24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>21.6/14.4</td>
<td>31.8/27.1</td>
<td>19.3/22.5</td>
<td>3.6/5.0</td>
<td>4.0/6.8</td>
<td>0.34/0.63</td>
<td>20.3/22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>19.5/17.1</td>
<td>28.3/27.6</td>
<td>23.3/20.9</td>
<td>4.4/3.1</td>
<td>5.5/5.9</td>
<td>0.4/0.9</td>
<td>16.3/23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: Track A/Track B
N/V = not valid due to building remodeling
Table 4 - Percentage of Each Grade Awarded by Track (1980-1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>W</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>60.1/</td>
<td>51.9/</td>
<td>48.6/</td>
<td>40.4/</td>
<td>48.5/</td>
<td>50.0/</td>
<td>44.1/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>57.7/</td>
<td>57.1/</td>
<td>57.6/</td>
<td>64.9/</td>
<td>54.1/</td>
<td>33.3/</td>
<td>45.8/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: Track A/Track B

N/V = not valid due to building remodeling
percentages have remained relatively stable with the Track A students receiving 60% of the grades of A and B. This indicates that there is indeed a difference in performance levels of the two Tracks at the end of the course.

It should be noted that some Track B students do receive grades of A and B. This suggests that there are some students whose skills do improve in the ability grouped system.

Comparison and Interpretation of Withdrawal Rates (1978-1983)

Table 5 is a comparison of the withdrawal rates of the two Tracks. This data indicates that more students in Track B fail to complete the course than those in Track A. This may be another indication that the program is not addressing the needs of the students, but there is no way to determine how many of these students would have withdrawn from the course if it were not grouped. There is also no way to determine how many students who did complete the ability grouped course would have withdrawn from a nongrouped course.

**Short-term Study**

Comparison and Interpretation of Final Examination Scores

A more in depth study of the effectiveness of ability grouping was performed during the Fall of 1983. Two groups of students, one from each Track, were compared based upon the results of the standard post-test and a final examination. A statistical analysis was performed, using the standard t-test of the means at a level of
Table 5 - Withdrawal Rates (%) (1978-1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Track A</th>
<th>Track B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
<td>N/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A = not available

N/V = not valid due to building remodeling
significance of 0.05. A summary of the results of this analysis may be found in Table 6. It can be seen from this data that at the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis must be rejected for the case of the comparison of the scores of the Track A and B students. This means that at the end of the course, the two groups of students had not attained the same level of achievement.

In comparing the performances of the two groups, we see that the average score for all students was 68, with a standard deviation of 20, while the comparable figures for Track A are 78 and 17, and 61 and 19 for Track B.

Another interesting comparison can be made between the distribution of final examination scores for the two groups. These distributions can be found in Table 7. It is interesting to note that of the Track A students, only one student (2.5%) received a score of less than 50, while ten students (25%) received scores of 90 or greater. In comparison, 18 students (29%) from Track B received scores less than 50, and only two students (3%) received scores of 90 or greater. This would once again seem to indicate a definite difference in the levels of achievement between the two groups.

Comparison and Interpretation of Post-test Scores

The standard post-test is a 15 minute test given to each student enrolled in the course at the end of the course. Its major use is to
Table 6 - Results of t-test for Final Exam Scores

Results of t-test
Level of Significance = 0.05
Critical Value $t > 1.960$
$H_0 = $ There is no difference between the average scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Track A &amp; B</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>Reject $H_0$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 - Distribution of Final Examination Scores, Fall, 1983 By Track

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Track A # of Scores</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Track B # of Scores</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 &amp; above</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00-09</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
standardize grade distributions, thus insuring that a grade earned in any particular section of the course would be earned in any other section of the course.

A statistical analysis (t-test) was performed on the post-test scores for the test groups, and the results can be found in Table 8. This test indicates that the null hypothesis must be accepted. That is, that no significant difference can be found between the scores of each group. This would seem to contradict the results obtained from the final examination. However, it is generally assumed that a longer test be more reliable (4), and I feel that the final examination tested on the higher cognitive levels of application and analysis, while the post-test is concerned mostly with the lower knowledge and comprehension levels (5). For these reasons, I feel that while the results of the post-test cannot be ignored, they must be viewed in a less significant light than the final examination results.
Table 8 - Results of t-test on Post-test Results

$H_0$ = There is no difference between the means of the two groups

Level of significance = 0.05
Critical value to >1.960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Track A &amp; B</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>Accept $H_0$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the limited amount of data available, no definite conclusions can be drawn from this study. However, the results seem to indicate that the ability grouping program may not be achieving its goal of bringing the less prepared student's level of achievement up to the level of the well prepared student. This conclusion is based on the results of the long term study of post-test results, grade distributions, and withdrawal rates, and the short term study of final examination scores. These results indicate that there does seem to be a significant difference between the levels of achievement of the two groups of students at the end of the course.

It is, however, impossible to determine how much, if any, the ability grouping program helps the less prepared students. This is due to there being no measure of the students' abilities before the course that can be correlated with their performance at the end of the course. The existing pre-test and post-test do not measure the same quantity. The pre-test measures skills that are thought to be necessary to take the course. The post-test measures knowledge which is supposed to be
gained by taking the course, and the skills tested by the pre-test are not represented in the post-test.

Another area that cannot be addressed by the available data is if the ability grouping program affects the achievement of the well prepared students. The high final examination scores of the Track A students may indicate that some of the students are not being challenged by the course.

A final area of concern for this study is that of instructor attitude. In other words, since the majority of the instructors have no background in educational methodology, the Track B instructors may actually be unconsciously depressing the performance of their students. If this self-fulfilling prophecy syndrome is occurring, a mixed ability group program may eliminate or lessen this problem.

In order to address these concerns, I would suggest that two further studies be performed. The first study would be conducted similarly to the present study. A group of students would be grouped using the current method. Then, each group would be given an extensive pre-test which would cover the material to be presented in the course. At the half-way point of the course, another examination could be given, and a final examination could be given at the end of the course. The two groups would be given the same instruction that is currently used. The results of the examinations would yield information about the effectiveness of the program, specifically, what actually happens to the gap between the two groups.
A second recommended study would determine if it is the program that is helping the less prepared student, or if some other variable is responsible for any gains made by the students.

In this study, a test group would be split into three groups. These groups would be a Track A group, a Track B group, and a Mixed group. The students in this Mixed group would be identified to the experimenter as Track A and B, but not to the instructor. The Track A and Mixed group would receive the current Track A instruction, and the Track B students would be given the current Track B instruction. As in the first proposed study, the students would be given an extensive pre-test, midterm test, and post-test.

The results of these tests could then be statistically analyzed. The results of this analysis should help determine if ability grouping is effective, and for the Mixed group, if heterogeneous grouping and Track A instruction is harmful to the less prepared student.

In lieu of these studies, and based on this study and my experiences, I would make the following suggestions for the current program.

If the course continues to be ability grouped, I would require more remedial work for the less prepared students. This could take the form of extra discussion sections or reestablishment of the supplemental material for these students. I would also recommend that the instructors assigned to teach these students receive extra instruction on teaching methods.
If the course is not to be ability grouped, but less prepared students are to be identified, extra help sessions could be offered. These would be open to all students, but the less prepared could be encouraged to attend these sessions. This system might allow the department to raise its standards and challenge the well prepared students.

Another alternative is to discontinue the ability grouping, and to offer a wider variety of courses. Students could be placed in an appropriate level course based on the results of an extensive placement test. If necessary, those students who are truly deficient could be placed in a non-credit remedial course. Successful completion of this course would be a prerequisite for placement in a credit course.

In conclusion, I feel this study has proved to be somewhat valuable. It has provided a starting point for further studies, and it has provided some information and insight on the effectiveness on the current course.
APPENDIX A

STANDARD PRE-TEST
PRE-LAB DIAGNOSTIC TEST

This test is designed to help you and us to determine how well prepared you are to begin laboratory work in Chemistry 104A. It will have NO bearing on your grade. In fact, cheating will have a detrimental effect because we will assume that you know more than you actually do. Please write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided for the multiple choice questions and the correct answer in the blank for all other questions. This test will be graded and discussed immediately upon completion.

SCORE: number correct out of 25

Part I: MATHEMATICS Select the answer that is equal to the first number.

1) \(2.4 \times 10^3\) = A) 240 B) .0024 C) 2400 D) \(\frac{1}{2400}\)

2) \(2.4 \times 10^{-3}\) = A) 240 B) .0024 C) 2400 D) \(\frac{1}{2400}\)

3) \(10^6 \times 10^4\) = A) \(10^{10}\) B) \(10^{24}\) C) \(10^2\) D) 64

Indicate the number of significant figures in each number.

4) 452.82

5) 4.68 \times 10^7

6) 0.00512

Solve each of the following equations for \(X\).

7) \(4X - 3 = Y\)

8) \(X + 6 = \frac{7}{3}\)

9) \((3X)^2 = 81\)

10) \((X + 1)^2 = Y + 5\)
Part II: CHEMICAL TERMINOLOGY From the KEY LIST select a formula for each of the substances described in each question.

_____ 11) This is an acid

       KEY LIST

 _____ 12) This is a base

       A) CH₄  C) HCl

 _____ 13) This is a salt

       B) NaOH  D) CO₂

 _____ 14) This is an organic molecule

       E) KCl

From the KEY LIST select a formula for each of the substances described in each question.

_____ 15) This is sulfuric acid

       KEY LIST

 _____ 16) This is iron (II) sulfate

       A) Na₂SO₄  D) Fe₂(SO₄)₃

 _____ 17) This is sulfate ion

       B) NaHSO₄  E) SO₄⁻²

 _____ 18) This is sodium sulfate

       C) H₂SO₄  F) FeSO₄

 _____ 19) Consider the preparation of 1 M H₂SO₄ from 6 M H₂SO₄. 10 ml of the 6 M H₂SO₄ will require the addition of how many milliliters of distilled water to produce a 1 M solution of H₂SO₄?

       A) 10  B) 30  C) 50  D) 60  E) it can't be done

 _____ 20) 500 ml of 6 M NaBr is added to 500 ml of 1 M Na₂SO₄. What is the final concentration of Na⁻?

       A) 1 M  B) 3 M  C) 3.5 M  D) 4 M  E) 6 M

From the KEY LIST select the response that best describes what would happen if you were to spill each of the following reagents on the skin of your forearm.

_____ 21) 18 M H₂SO₄

       KEY LIST

       A) a soothing action

 _____ 22) 0.1 M NaOH

       B) immediate destruction of skin

       C) a burning action

       D) a soap-like action

       E) no perceptible action
From the KEY LIST identify each of the pieces of laboratory equipment pictured below.

**KEY LIST**

A) pipet
B) buret
C) graduated cylinder
D) Buchner funnel
E) Erlenmeyer flask
F) analytical balance
G) beam balance
H) side-arm flask
APPENDIX B

SAMPLE STANDARD POST-TEST
This test is being given to help us to evaluate where your class stands relative to the other sections of 104a. Your instructor's grade distribution could be influenced by your class scores on this test.

Part 1: (one point per question)

A. From KEY LIST A select the one technique that was demonstrated in the indicated experiment

   ____ 1) Determination of antacid tablet strengths (#10).
   ____ 2) Spectroscopic identification of cations (#7c).
   ____ 3) Determination of optimum reaction conditions (#6b).
   ____ 4) Separation of components A, B, and C (#2).

   KEY LIST A
   A) Chromatography
   B) Titration
   C) Absorption Spectroscopy
   D) Emission Spectroscopy
   E) None of the above

B. For each of the questions in part I A above, indicate which kinds of analysis the experiment demonstrated by choosing the correct response from KEY LIST B.

   ____ 5) (Question 1)
   ____ 6) (Question 2)
   ____ 7) (Question 3)
   ____ 8) (Question 4)

   KEY LIST B
   A) Quantitative Analysis
   B) Qualitative Analysis
   C) Both A and B
   D) None of the above
C. From KEY LIST C, select the one piece of equipment most necessary to best perform the indicated operation. You are to consider only those items on the list.

KEY LIST C

9) Determination of the melting point of an organic substance.
   A) Buret
   B) Crucible
   C) Funnel

10) Determination of the absorbance spectrum of a colored solution.
    D) Graduated Cylinder
    E) Pipet
    F) Thermometer

11) Performance of spot tests to determine the presence of ions in a solution.
    G) Spectroscope
    H) Spectrophotometer

12) Titration of an unknown solid with a known solution.

D. The KEY LIST represents the labels of reagent bottles commonly available in the lab. From this list, select the reagent described in each question.

KEY LIST D

13) Add 6M ammonia dropwise until a precipitate just begins to form.
    A) 6M NaOH
    B) 6M NH₄OH
    C) 6M HNO₃
    D) 6M CH₃COOH
    E) 6M H₂C₂O₄
    F) 15M HNO₃

14) Add 6M acetic acid until the solution is just barely acidic.

15) Add a few drops of dilute nitric acid.

16) The most dangerous reagent on the list.

PART II: (two points per question)

17) A student weighed a sample on an analytical balance and reported the weight in his report as being 3.02. Of course this is not correct, and the student was docked an appropriate number of points for this mistake. How should he have reported this value to avoid losing any points.
A student performed the following steps in doing experiment 7d (measurement of absorbance vs wavelength).

1) He turned on the spectrophotometer.
2) With an empty cuvette in the sample compartment, he set the meter to read "0% T."
3) He removed the cuvette and filled it half full with distilled water, replaced it in the sample compartment and set the meter to read "0 absorbance."
4) He removed the cuvette, emptied it and filled it with his unknown solution. He then placed the cuvette back into the spectrophotometer, closed the lid and took a reading in absorbance units.

This procedure is incomplete. Certain important operations were omitted. You are to discuss the two most important omissions by first stating the step and then the omitted operation.

Part III: (two points per question)

For the next five questions, you are to identify the pieces of lab equipment indicated by your instructor. Each item was used this term in the lab. If the equipment is used to make measurements, indicate the units of measurement of the particular piece of equipment that you used this term in this course. If the item is not used for measurement, write "NONE" in the appropriate space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>UNITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

FINAL EXAMINATION FOR SHORT TERM STUDY
DIRECTIONS:

1. There are 13 questions to this exam. Make sure you have all of them before you begin.
2. Answer all questions in the space provided.
3. For problems requiring calculations, show all work!!!! No credit will be given for bare answers. Underline final answers.
4. Stapled to this exam, you will find a piece of graph paper for question #10, and a page of useful information.
5. Be sure you print your name on this page and sign it. Any exam without a name on it will be given a grade of zero.
6. This exam will not be returned to you. Check with your instructor about reviewing it after it has been graded.

***********************************************************************
GRADE WAIVER
I give __________________________ permission to post my final grade (Instructor's Name)
in Chemistry 104a in a public manner.

_____________________________ Student's Signature

***********************************************************************
SCORES
1. ___ 6. ___ 11. ___ B2. ___
2. ___ 7. ___ 12. ___ Total ______
3. ___ 8. ___ 13. ___
4. ___ 9. ___ sub ___
5. ___ 10. ___ B1. ___
1. Joe Chemist wished to prepare 4M nitric acid from concentrated acid. He cautiously went over to the fume hood and retrieved a bottle of HCl (conc.). As he carried (with both hands) the bottle back to his workspace, his safety goggles fell out of his pocket and became tangled in his sandal, causing him to lose his balance. He spilled some acid on his bare knee. Cleverly, he poured some dilute NaOH solution on his knee to neutralize the acid. Back at his workspace, he measured 10 ml of acid using the triple beam balance. Slowly, with stirring, he poured in the water. Unable to contain his excitement, he knocked over his beaker of ethanol, which was heating over a low flame, onto his unfinished introduction. Frustrated, he grabbed his sandwich and went home. He was subsequently given a failing grade for the course. What did he do wrong? (Find at least 8)

2. Cosmos Klutz wanted to weigh out some NaOH on the analytical balance, so he performed the following steps.
1. Cosmos went over to the balance, and checked to see if it was level.
2. With the doors open and nothing on the pan, he moved the arrest layer to full release and set the zero.
3. He returned the lever to full arrest and dumped the NaOH pellets onto the balance pan.
4. Cosmos then closed the doors and moved the arrest lever to partial arrest.
5. He noted the approximate mass, and dialed it in.
6. He turned the lever to full release, dialed in the final mass, and recorded it on his data sheet.
7. He moved the lever to full arrest, opened the door, and removed the NaOH pellets.
8. Cosmos closed the door and returned all the weights to zero.

The observant instructor promptly killed poor Cosmos because he did not use the balance correctly. List at least 2 things he did wrong, and what he should have done.
3. On the reagent bench, you find the following solvents
   1) dichloromethane
   2) distilled water
   3) 6M HNO₃

Which of them would you use to separate:

a) C₁₃H₈O and LiCl

b) Cu(NO₃)₂ and PbO

c) C₆H₄Cl₂ and MgO

The following table may be useful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pb⁺⁺</th>
<th>Li⁺</th>
<th>Cu⁺⁺</th>
<th>Mg⁺⁺</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nitrate, NO₃⁻</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxide, O⁻</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chloride, Cl⁻</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulfate, SO₄²⁻</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations:  
W water soluble  
A insoluble in water but soluble in acids  
a insoluble in water but sparingly in acids
7. Christine Chemist performed a TLC experiment. What do the letters TLC stand for?

8. Give a practical use for TLC.

9. Given $E = 4.84 \times 10^{-12}$ ergs, to what wavelength of light does this correspond?

10. Phillip Photon's lab notebook contained the following information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Absorbance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1.0 \times 10^{-3}$ M</td>
<td>0.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2.0 \times 10^{-3}$ M</td>
<td>0.451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3.0 \times 10^{-3}$ M</td>
<td>0.662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4.0 \times 10^{-3}$ M</td>
<td>0.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown # 23564</td>
<td>0.523</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the graph paper provided, construct a calibration curve for the data, and determine the concentration of his unknown.
11. Assume the following data for the indicator X:

\[ \text{HInd form: yellow} \]
\[ \text{Ind}^- \text{ form: blue} \]

a) Write an equilibrium equation for this indicator in acid solution.

b) An increase in \( \text{H}_3\text{O}^+ \) will yield which color?

c) An increase in \( \text{OH}^- \) will yield which color?

12. What is the relationship between acid and base at an endpoint?

13. The following page came out of Tommy Titration's notebook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mass of KHP</th>
<th>Volume NaOH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1264 g</td>
<td>15.22 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2201 g</td>
<td>16.34 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2169 g</td>
<td>15.24 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2099 g</td>
<td>14.63 ml</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \text{KHP} = \text{KHC}_8\text{H}_4\text{O}_4 \]

Calculate:

a) Average molarity of NaOH
b) Average deviation for molarity of NaOH

BONUS QUESTIONS

B1. Explain why you would need to use a spectroscope when doing a flame test on a multicomponent unknown.

B2. Pick the best wavelength to use for a Beer's Law plot from the following absorption spectrum.

Good luck on the rest of your finals. Have a happy holiday season.
USEFUL INFORMATION

Planck's Constant  \( 6.6262 \times 10^{-27} \text{ erg-sec} \)

Atomic Masses

H = 1.00797
O = 15.9994
K = 39.102
C = 12.0115
REFERENCES


5. Gage and Berliner, p. 57-9.