

## De-tracking LFHS so everyone gets the same trophy. . .

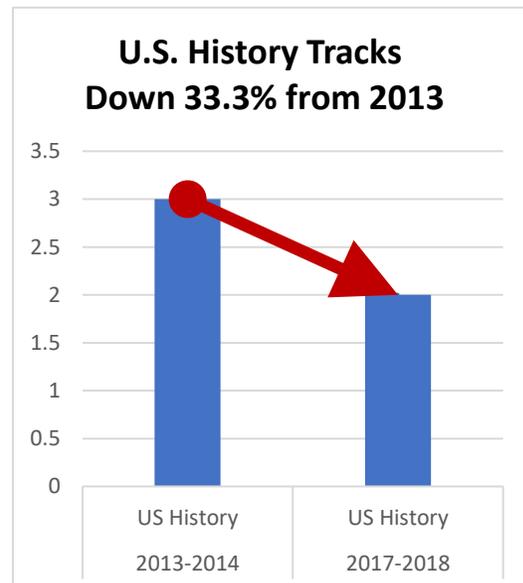
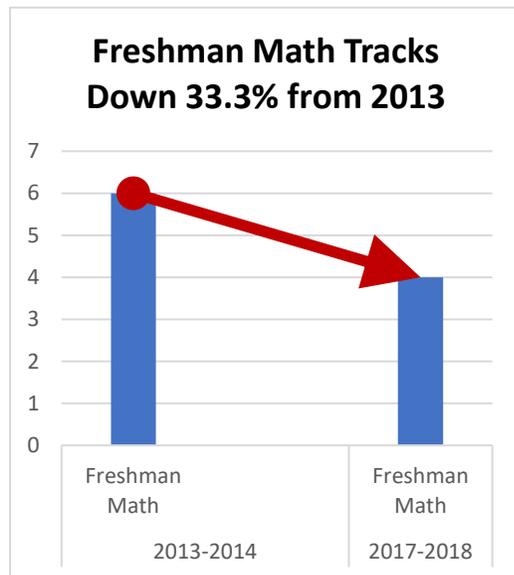
A great body of research on academic tracking or “grouping” indicates it is the preferable approach for great outcomes for all learners.

We don’t understand why the past protocol—allowing parents, students and guidance counselors to choose courses for their children—was a system that needed fixing!

We don’t understand why the “fix” for a system that wasn’t broken **is to reduce, not enhance, options for all learners by eliminating academic tracks.**

**The risky removal of academic tracks from LFHS started several years ago.**

De-tracking substantially affects LFHS’ reputation and the ability of *all* our graduates to obtain their highest levels of learning and to attend the college of their dreams.



Here’s the 3-step game plan Superintendent Simeck and the administration is following, apparently with Board approval. They’re using chapter 2, “What Tracking Is and How to Start Dismantling it” from the book “De-Tracking for Excellence and Equity.”

### Step 1: “Begin Where Tracking Starts”

*“Detracking should begin where tracking begins. If your elementary school tracks, that is the place to start. If tracking is delayed until the middle school years, begin there.”*

This was accomplished several years ago as one of Superintendent Simeck’s first acts, with the abrupt and controversial elimination of the Quest/Advanced Plus program in Lake Forest District 67.

## Rationale for Quest/Advanced Plus Curriculum

If success as an adult is dependent on the ability to put forth effort, to be persistent, be organized, goal oriented, and a problem solver, then ...

- We must consider that these traits are only developed when the answers are not easily accessible.
- To the degree that Quest/Advanced Plus students are different from their peers, they need a different set of interventions to get them to work and grow academically.
- Quest/Advanced Plus curriculum is not designed to give some students an advantage, but to provide an equal opportunity to develop potential and skills for success.

(Quest/Advance Plus flyer, circa 2003)

### Step 2: “Begin with Teachers Who Are Interested”

*“It is not an accident that our detracking began in both the district's middle and high school with the English and social studies departments.”*

In 2013 District 115 spent over \$35,000 on a trip to a New York high school for several District employees, many from English and Social Studies. This included \$7,700 in hotels and over \$2,000 in limousines as well as air fare, restaurants and other expenses. **No work product was produced as a result of that trip, despite the explicit nature of the Freedom of Information Act request asking for it** (See the District response to this [FOIA request](#), and follow-ups and the receipts for expenses are at the bottom of the [last follow-up](#)).

Through other channels, we obtained a [District 115 memo](#) from a Social Studies teacher regarding that trip that clearly describes the Administration’s then secret plan to remove academic tracks at LFHS.

The secret to de-track was first exposed by challengers to the status quo, at the March 11, 2017 [League of Women Voter's Debate!](#)

### Step 3: Eliminate the Lowest Track First

*“You should be prepared for opposition to phasing out low-track classes.”*

*“There were several advantages to this approach. First, it allowed parents who were worried about the influx of the former "low-track" students into the middle track to move their children up to the honors track. Although this is a less-than-noble reason for opening access to the high track, it did quell some parent opposition and allowed the reform to proceed politically.”*

From 2013 through 2018 (current Guides to Courses have not yet been examined), LFHS has been de-tracking by eliminating the lowest tracks first, thereby disserving that population first.

Here are just a few examples: Freshman math tracks have decreased by 33.3%. U.S. History tracks have decreased by 33.3%. World Civilizations offerings have decreased by 20% (excluding “AP World History” from this calculation for both years). Environmental Geoscience tracks have decreased by 20% and a “Basic Science” class eliminated. The current board is in favor of this risky, costly plan.

And there is no end in sight to “de-tracking for equity”.

**The educational agenda of “equalizing” students and offering fewer opportunities for them to achieve instead of more, is bad for *all students at all levels and does not serve their best educational interests.***

**Conclusion:**

Four years ago, among great community involvement and concern, we were assured by school leadership that LFHS was not removing academic tracks. However, we have learned the contrary is true: not only was the Administration in the midst of de-tracking LFHS and hiding it from parents and taxpayers, it hired leadership that embraced that goal!