



## SCHOOLS STRUGGLE TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS WITH 'SENIORITIS'

May 15, 2006

*As spring arrives and thousands of high school students across the country are afflicted with "senioritis," educators look for innovative ways to keep students focused.*

It happens each spring as the days lengthen and grow warmer: High school seniors who have applied to colleges or finished most graduating requirements struggle to stay focused on work that doesn't seem relevant.

Even the best students who once spent hours on homework succumb and turn in sub-par work or no work at all. Concentration is difficult. "Senioritis" has struck.

"There's sort of a change somewhere where it doesn't feel like it's worth it, or it doesn't feel necessary anymore," Andrew Geiszler, a Great Falls High School in Montana senior with a grade point average of 4.0, told the Great Falls Tribune.

They count the days till graduation or until they make big decisions, like to go to college or join the military.

"I am ready for it to be over," Joshua Tardif, a senior at Mount Ararat High School in Maine who is trying to decide between the Army and going to Thomas College, told the Portland Press Herald.

### **What schools are doing to keep students motivated**

Educators have been frustrated by senioritis for years.

"The 12<sup>th</sup> grade is the biggest wasteland in America," Charles Reed, chancellor of the California State University system, told USA Today.

Some schools allow internships, letting seniors take classes at local colleges and universities, or by instituting special skill building programs that give students a taste of what's to come.

At Freeport High School in Maine, seniors apply to participate in a month-long project that they must turn into a presentation. Often projects are related to or lead to post-graduation work or study.

One student refurbished a lobster boat in preparation of becoming a commercial fisherman and another traveled to Korea to visit her birth family.

“You hear these clichés about authentic learning, but it really is an experience, a huge source of community pride,” the school's principal Tom Edwards told the Portland Press Herald.

“This is an opportunity to gain real-life experience,” Sara Maghen, who is interning at Los Angeles Superior Court and is considering becoming a lawyer, told Time magazine.

“This is way more interesting than studying for my advanced-placement bio test.”

At New Trier Township High School in Illinois seniors, take a "Senior Institute" in which they learn about money management, college life, eating disorders and other issues.

“It’s human to be thinking about what is ahead,” Janice Dreis, one of the school’s directors, told the Washington Post. “We have to let them think about that.”

## **Repercussions**

Some school systems try to use fear to keep students focused on academics.

Two years ago, the California State University system created the Early Assessment Program (EAP) which tests 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students’ readiness for college-level English and math.

“We’re trying to give them an early-warning signal so they take the courses they need to take instead of taking it easy,” Allison Jones, Cal State’s vice chancellor of academic affairs, told Time magazine.

It worked for Andrew Halstead who took extra math courses he wasn’t required to take to graduate after failing the math EAP.

“When my friends were going out senior year, I was studying,” the now college freshman told Time.

And although most seniors don’t know it, schools can rescind acceptances.

“It is not at all rare for a college to withdraw an offer of admission when grades drop significantly over the course of senior year. (I have a folder full of copies of these letters),” Illinois college counselor Mary Lee Hoganson said in a letter to the College Board.

## **Even sports are impacted**

Academics are not the only areas impacted by senioritis -- sports feel the hit, too.

“It’s tough for kids to focus when there is so much going on,” Bruce Rich, softball coach at Chelmsford High School in Massachusetts, told the Lowell Sun.

“It’s kind of like a minefield trying to get through that first week of the state tournament while dealing with banquets and proms -- and especially the days after banquets and proms.”

-- *Compiled by Annie Schleicher for NewsHour Extra*  
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