

## **What is “Senioritis” in a Portfolio Based High School?**

An action research study

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### **I. Research Question and Study Rationale**

A 2001 report by the National Commission on the High School Senior Year found the restructuring of the senior year to be a national priority. Internationally, the U.S. is especially weak when comparing student performances at the end of secondary education (National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001). Throughout the U.S., senior grade inflation appears to have increased (Perkins & Roey, 2004), indicative of a lessening of student performance scrutiny at the end of high school.

Given this information, there are a number of questions that one might ask:

- What perspectives do students and senior advisors have that may illuminate the phenomena that is “senioritis”?
- Do students not apply themselves as well as they can during their senior year, and if they do not, what are the reasons?
- How substantial is the claim that the senior year is a period when students are not effective learners?

- What are the reasons for any altered capacity for learning? Do students and senior advisors have advice that may improve the senior year?

This study is an investigation of the senioritis phenomenon and an attempt to begin to answer these questions and to develop a coherent understanding of the phenomenon.

## **II. Background and Context**

The Beacon School, a high-performing NYC public high school that uses portfolio assessments, is the setting for this analysis of senioritis. Fifty-four of the 238 Beacon seniors are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 55.5% of the students are female. Student retention was reported to be 88% in 2004-2005; 96% of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade students graduated in 2005; and 94% of the 2005 seniors were accepted to college. In her book, *New York City's Best Public High Schools*, Clara Hemphill describes Beacon is a highly successful school that admits about 1 in 10 of the students who apply for admission. Because of the high rate of students who attend college and the high demand for admission, Beacon is according to Levin's (1991, 2002) framework and definition of school choice, a "choice" school.

A fortuitous attribute of Beacon is the advisory system. Advisors have known their students throughout the high school process, and often the senior advisors have developed a lasting relationship with their advisees. Until February of 2006, advisories met biweekly for 45 minutes, for the four years of high school. After February 2006, the advisory structure changed to a single weekly 45-minute meeting.

Anecdotally, the Beacon staff has noted a trend for students to "slack-off" during the senior year, but it is not clear whether this slack-off means that student performance diminishes.

### III. Review of the Literature

It is important to note that an academic study of senioritis does not exist in the literature. The

Wikipedia definition (from October, 2005) is as follows:

**Senioritis** is an imaginary syndrome attributed to students nearing the end of [high school](#) and [college](#) in the [United States](#) and [Canada](#). Its symptoms can include [laziness](#), [procrastination](#), [apathy](#) toward schoolwork, and [truancy](#). While senioritis is most certainly not a real [disease](#), its effects are well known to most experienced educators. This imagined affliction is a symptom of students' complacency once they have all but guaranteed their place at [commencement](#). After [college admission](#) letters arrive in early [spring](#), high school seniors feel even less pressure to push themselves academically. However, in an effort to combat senioritis, many colleges require that an updated transcript be sent from the high school after the end of the school year, and will revoke admission if a student's grades drop dramatically (Wikipedia, 2005).

The College Board definition explains senioritis as:

"...the term used to describe the slacking off of some high school seniors during their spring semester or upon being accepted to college. Plummeting grades, dropping or blowing off classes, general lack of ambition, and far-off gazes are just a few of the symptoms of senioritis. Easy to catch and difficult to get rid of, senioritis can be more dangerous than seniors realize to their plans for the future." (College Board, 2005).

Creswell (1998, 2003) has written that phenomenological and mixed methods studies are powerful procedures for illuminating reasons of experience. Some of these reasons may be indicators of causality. Therefore, with the intent to understand the events that may cause "senioritis," and to explore the supposed phenomena that is "senioritis", Creswell's research methods will be used.

Beatty, Neisser, Trent, & Heubert (2001) explained that dropping out from high school is a common occurrence that is both poorly tracked and poorly addressed. Testing reforms have outpaced educational reforms, and this disparity is troubling with respect to student expectations and the high school graduation rate. Some student groups are more likely to drop out from high school I wonder if there are parallels with senioritis and the tendency to dropout from high school.

Conley (2001) has given solid advice for rethinking the senior year. His recommendations not only include policy recommendations, but directly address the National Commission on the High School Senior Year Report (2001). However, the Report and Conley's interpretations and

recommendations do not adequately address the concept of “senioritis.” For example, Conley’s recommendations, while pragmatic and purposeful, do not address a framework of student sentiment that will better explain how seniors are engaging themselves to learn with respect to school expectations.

## **Our Study**

### ***Tools.***

Transcript analysis indicated which students have not performed as strongly after they become seniors, and these data were related to overall grade performances.

Survey analysis indicated the frequency of student-perceived senioritis, what the perceived senioritis is the result of, and if the college admissions process influenced senioritis.

AP-class test-takers analysis was used to examine the tendency of students to take the AP exams during their senior year, on account of teacher exam-taking requirement policies.

Senior advisor student-rankings were used to examine what senior advisors believed about senioritis, whether their “knowing” of the students for several years had any predictive value, and to chart the perceived degree of senioritis during the school year.

Student interviews were used to reveal student beliefs about the senior year and senioritis.

***Class of 2006 GPA by semester.*** Transcript analysis indicates that the Beacon seniors GPAs declined from the junior to the senior year. The SPSS software package was used to perform this analysis. To tabulate semester GPAs, and because Beacon does not calculate GPA and only uses whole-letter grades (A,B,C,D, and “No-Credit”) without plus or minus designations, GPA was calculated by converting an A to 4, a B to 3, a C to 2, a D to 1, and a No-Credit (NC) grade to 0. Using these conversions, the class of 2006 has a Fall 2004 GPA mean of 2.885 with a standard deviation (SD) of .898. The same students have a Spring 2005 GPA mean of 2.798 with an SD

of .925, and a Fall 2005 GPA mean of 2.522 with an SD of 1.137. Table I summarizes these data:

**Table I. Class of 2006 GPA statistics by semester.**

<u>Semester:</u>	<u>GPA mean:</u>	<u>Semester GPA standard deviation:</u>
Fall 2004 (n = 238)	2.885	.898
Spring 2005 (n = 238)	2.798	.925
Fall 2005 (n = 238)	2.522	1.137

Seven students who transferred from Beacon during the spring or fall of 2005 and 9 students who entered Beacon after or during the spring of 2005 were not included in the analysis because the transcript data was incomplete for these students. The spring 2006 transcript grades were not entered in this analysis but will be included in future analysis.

Regression analysis was performed to compare the fall 2004 semester GPA mean to the spring 2005 semester GPA mean and the fall 2006 semester GPA mean. Because the groups are not independent of each other, regression analysis is a reasonable way to compare the group means. Regression analysis also allows for multiple-group comparisons and an overall comparison of semester effects. This analysis required the use of dummy codes using SPSS.

The comparison groups and dummy codes are as follows:

Category:	d1	d2
Fall 04	1	0
Spring 05	0	1
Fall 05	0	0

These codes are orthogonal and allow for the comparison of the Fall 05 GPA to the other two groups. Multiple regression revealed that the semester GPA means were significantly different from each other overall ( $F = 8.178, p < 0.00045$ ). The Fall 04 GPA ( $p < 0.0045$ ) and Spring 05 ( $p < 0.03$ ) GPA group averages were significantly different from the Fall 05 GPA group mean. Note

that the standard deviation increased each semester while the semester GPA mean declined (see Table I). Therefore, a greater amount of variance in the GPAs occurred as the students advanced in semester and grade level, while their GPAs declined.

**Survey analysis.** Survey analysis indicates that students have a strong awareness of senioritis, and that overall the seniors felt unmotivated to complete schoolwork. In an 18 question survey about art education designed and administered by Rebecca Zilinski, 2 questions about senioritis were asked. These questions—the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> questions in the survey—asked: “Do you think you have senioritis?” and “If so, why do you think you have senioritis?”

The responses that follow are the student’s answers to these questions. The first answer is in parenthesis, and if any expanded commentary was made to the question, these comments are in brackets. The answer to the second question is in quotations, and a student number (#) has been assigned. Codes that follow the student numbers are described in the analysis at the end of this section.

Of the twenty-seven students randomly surveyed, responses to the questions were:

- (Yes) “Because it’s the end of the year and we’ve done so much work already that it’s almost as if we’re too tired to finish.” [student #1]w, s, m
- (Yes) “I don’t have too much motivation to do work.” [student #2]w, m
- (Yes) “Because I don’t care that much about school any more; failure to come to school on time.” [student #3]m
- (Yes) Blank. Above: I’m not interested in school. [student #4]m
- (Yes) “Because I am a senior. I’m just lazy in general.” [student #5]s, m
- (Yes) “Because I’m ready to leave and get ready for college.” [student #6]c, m
- (Yes) [I’m tired of doing homework, but I still do it.] “Tired of homework.” [student #7]w, m
- (Yes) “Because I have 2 months left, and though I do like learning new things I don’t like particularly doing the work.” [student #8]w, s, m
- (Yes) “I barely do any homework, especially for math. I procrastinate all the time. I do the bare minimum to graduate, never go out of my way to impress teachers.” [student #9]w, s, m
- (Yes) “Tired of doing the work and coming to school.” [student #10]w, m
- (Yes) “I’m not taking classes that I want to take, and I want to graduate already.” [student #11]s, m
- (Yes) [Sometimes, but it is hard to fully give into it.] “Because there will be many times where I don’t feel like doing something. So many things are going on in the last year of high school.” [student #12]w, s, m
- (Yes) “Not doing the homework.” [student #13]w, m
- (Yes) [Since the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.] “I procrastinate so bad that I wait till the period before to do my homework.” [student #14]w, m

- (Yes) “Because I feel like the work I’m doing doesn’t affect anything and I’m not interested in the courses I am taking.” [student #15]s, m
- (Yes) “Because I worked so hard for four years, I feel I deserve a break.” [student #16]w, s, m
- (Yes) “Because.” [student #17]
- (Yes) “I’ve stopped doing work.” [student #18]w, m
- (Yes) “My focus has gone away, and I’m not at the top of my work as I was last year.” [student #19]w, s, m
- (Yes) “Because I’m almost done with high school and the college process.” [student #20]c, s, m
- (No) “I don’t.” [student #21]
- (No) [blank] [student #22]
- (No) “Not really, but I want to finish HS.” [student #23]
- (No) “Absolutely not!” [student #24]
- (No) “But I’m not doing as well as I could. I have a lot of responsibilities and a lot of school work.” [student #25]
- (No) “Good education, not that hard.” [student #26]
- (No) “No!” [student #27]

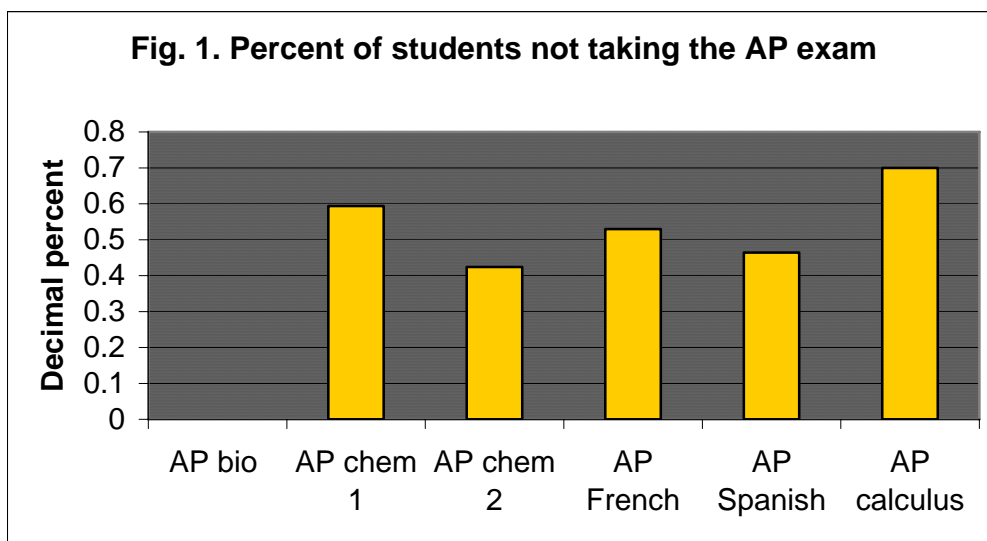
Note that a definition of senioritis was never provided to the students, although it was a topic of conversation in advisories.

Of the 27 students surveyed, 7 students declared that they did not have senioritis. I have used code designations to categorize the issues the students raised. Of the 20 students who declared they have senioritis, 12 students mentioned diminished work completion as a measure of their senioritis. These student numbers are marked with a w. Those students who mentioned colleges are marked with a “c.” Only 2 students explicitly blamed college to this “why” question. The uniqueness of the senior year compared to other years (marked with an “s”) was noted by 9 of the 20 students. It is apparent that in April of 2006, the class of 2006 had an abundant awareness of the year being different than other years. Of the 20 students with self-declared senioritis, 19 of the students declared lack of motivation to be an important measure of their senioritis—these students are coded with an m.

***AP-test taking tendencies and classroom policies.*** More than 90 percent of the students in the Beacon AP classes are seniors. There was a very strong trend for seniors to enroll in an AP class and not take the exam if given the opportunity. This is shown in Figure 1. The students who enrolled in AP biology were required to take the AP exam to receive credit for the class, and a letter was sent to parents at the beginning of the course, which explained this stipulation. All

seniors who enrolled in Biology sat for the exam, excepting two students who dropped the class in the middle of the year. Therefore, requiring all students to take the AP exam seems to be a reasonable school policy for all Beacon AP classes excepting French, where the exam is expected to be at a level above the proficiency of all students who take the class.

The AP exam dates were in the middle of May, a substantial conflict with the NY school year that ends in late June, according to all of the AP teachers, who reported that it is difficult to motivate the class to learn after the exam. The trend for students to enroll in the AP class, then slack off and not complete the exam is very high overall. This issue was addressed in the student interviews (see Figure 1).

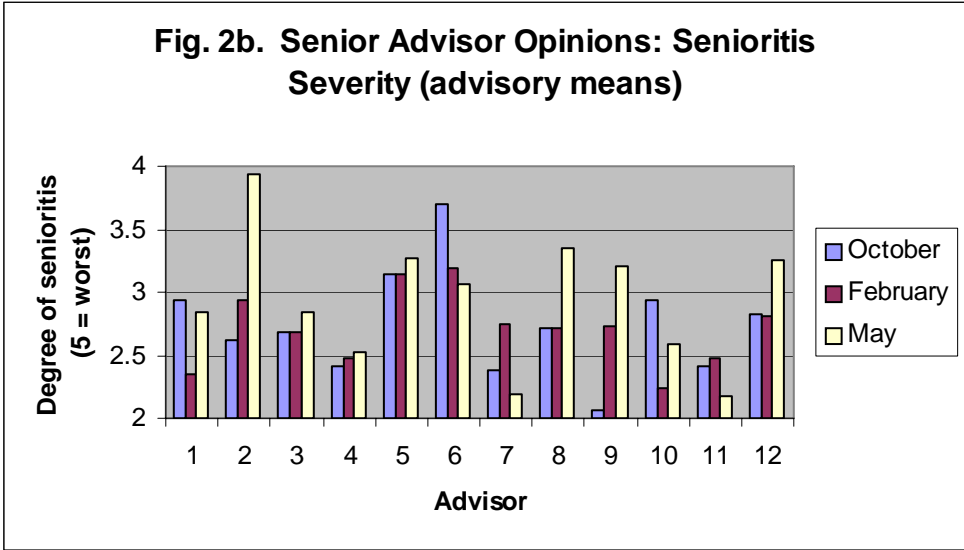
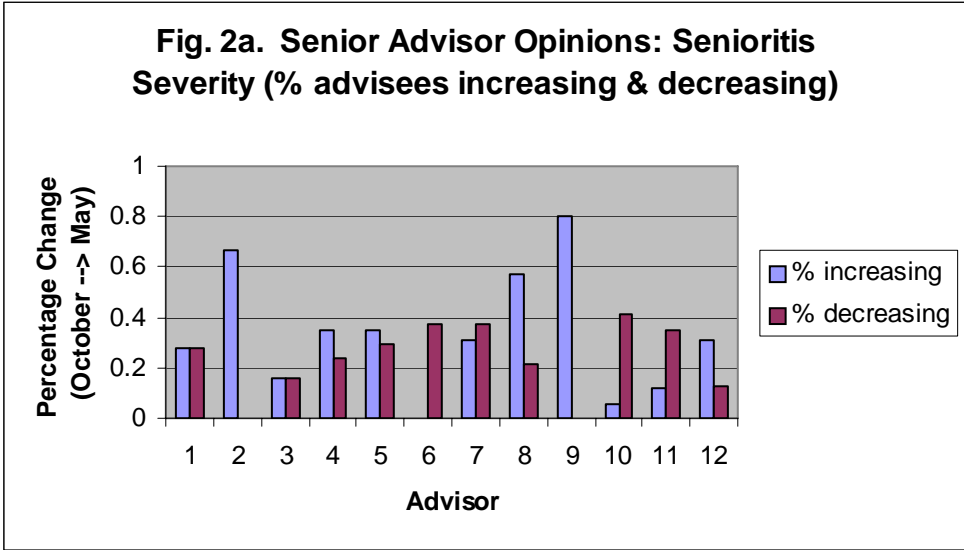


**Fig. 1. Percent of students in AP classes who did not take the AP exam.** The total number of students (>90% of the students were seniors) in each class were: 29 in AP biology, 32 in AP chemistry section 1, 33 in AP chemistry section 2, 17 in AP French, 28 in AP Spanish, and 20 in AP calculus. The AP biology class was the only course with a requirement to take the AP exam to receive credit for the course.



**Senior advisor moving rankings of senioritis severity.** It was anticipated that Senior advisors would have some predictive ability about the degree of senioritis in their advisories. In early October, advisors were asked to first predict the amount of senioritis that each student advisee would have during the senior year. The College Board and Wikipedia definition of senioritis was provided to the advisors prior to their ratings. The degree of senioritis was then evaluated by the advisor in March, after the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter grades and then in early June, prior to graduation. A 1-5 scale was used, with 1 meaning that no senioritis was apparent (or predicted in October), and 5 meaning that the most fulminate form of senioritis was apparent (or predicted in October). No decimal places were allowed for the ratings.

The advisor ratings (and the scale for comparison) are depicted in Fig. 2. A 1-5 scale (no decimals were allowed, but are instead a result of averaging the advisee rankings) was used to rate the severity of senioritis of all advisees (each advisor had about 18 advisees). All 12 senior advisors changed their ratings of their advisees at each time (Fig.2a), usually by a scaled value of  $\pm 1$ . The mean advisory rating declined over the year for 5 advisors and increased for 7 advisors comparing the October predictions. Four advisors reported substantial increases in senioritis in their advisories comparing their predictions (advisors #2, 8, 9, 12) and only 1 advisor reported a substantial decline (advisor #6). The March ranking was notably different from the June assessment. The March ranking increased by June in 9 of the advisories. The senioritis means of each advisory was  $2.74 \pm .427$  in October,  $2.71 \pm .294$  in March, and  $2.94 \pm .514$  in June. Therefore, all advisors believed their advisees had a moderate amount of senioritis throughout the year. Ten of the 12 advisors rated 40% or more of their advisees to have experienced a change in the amount of senioritis by at least one whole-number value, with no decimal places on the rating scale, between October and June (Fig. 2a). Advisors were able to generally predict the amount of senioritis that their advisory would have. Overall, advisors had a tendency to expect a similar amount of senioritis for the different advisories (Fig. 2b).



**Fig. 2. Advisor rankings of senioritis severity.** All 12 senior advisors were asked to rate the degree of senioritis for each advisee in October (a prediction), March (after quarter 3 grades were calculated), and June (before graduation). Fig. 2a explains the movement of student senioritis ratings by advisor, with the decimal percentage of students in the advisory increasing or decreasing a whole-number ranked value without any decimal places, on a 1-5 scale. The least senioritis severity was rated with a 1, the greatest severity was rated with a 5. Fig. 2b depicts the mean senioritis rating of each entire advisory at these times.

**Interviews.** Student interviews reveal a complex web of accountability-awareness and school-structure questioning with respect to the senior year. Clearly, the system is not aligned with student needs and/or expectations of themselves.

Interviews of seniors were consistent with the survey data but the reasons for senioritis gives insight into the causal nature. The interviews considered the same issues but necessitated different places and forms of conversation on account of student personalities and student available time. Therefore, a group interview of my own advisory was done in early June; three solitary interviews of different students were done in January, March, and April; a student essay on senioritis was collected; and more than 12 informal hallway conversations were noted. The interviewees were not random students but students that I know. These students were of varied ability and approachable personality, which may have had a selective component overall. My advisory is a random sample of students, excepting one student transfer in and one transfer out from other advisories. The comments of the student who transferred in are omitted from these interpretations to diminish bias. My interpretations are as follows.

It was easy to draw out the impact of the college process on the sentiments of the senior year. Students sometimes also complained about the process without prompting. However, the group interview of my advisory revealed a very heterogeneous opinion about what should change in the senior year, and why it should change. College was at the forefront of the explained perceived causality for the diminishing motivation—because students had already been accepted to college and the value of grades was then perceivably less. However, the type of coursework that the students recommended to replace the current courses, if any, shows that overall the students have very heterogeneous requests that were somewhat related to their own perceived next steps in life and their unique interests. My advisees that slipped the worst during their senior year, with respect to their grade performances requested ending school earlier, declaring that school should be done by now because they were admitted to college. In fact, my advisees were also aware that their colleges did not require high grades during the senior year. One student asked his

college admissions officer about senior grades, determined there were no expectations, and did terribly as a senior compared to his junior year performance. His performance was diminished, according to him, because of the explicit knowledge that his college (arguably a selective college) only needed him to graduate.

My advisees who performed strongly during their senior year requested a greater selection of course offerings, a notable constraint for small and mid-sized schools that do not have the staffing. Several students praised the breadth of course offerings that Beacon has. All students commiserated about the college process, which required an excessive amount of paperwork, challenging interactions with parents and school staff (for example, I wrote 28 letters of recommendation and mailed approximately 280 letters of recommendation and scholarship applications for the 2006 senior class), and the need for time to cogitate these choices.

A student essay, hallway conversations, and informal interviews indicate that many students believe they deserve a break, consistent with the survey data, above. It was hard to get the students to explain why they had senioritis beyond a retrospective look at the amount of work they had previously done in high school. Overall, the students wanted to know why what they were learning mattered, why a lot of work was required at this stage, and despite many of the students having a substantive desire to learn, time with friends was prioritized. It is relevant to note that Beacon offers AP and elective coursework, that the staff expects a high degree of student performance to receive a high grade, and that students write a substantial number of papers in their classes and for their portfolio presentations. The Academic Standards Committee surveyed the student population and determined that the average student completed about 2 hours of homework each night.

One of the most valued experiences of the senior year was international and philanthropic travel. The students who assisted the New Orleans clean up effort over spring break, those who traveled

to Venezuela, and those who traveled to South Africa for school trips reported these experiences to be life-changing.

A conversation with the college officer, who identified students who were admitted early to college on the senior class list, revealed that many of these students had a greater degree of senioritis. Anecdotally, students who were admitted early to college sometimes made snide comments about their acceptance, experienced a school performance decline, and overall were not admired by the college office.

With respect to the AP class performances, when I asked students why they didn't take the AP exam, a good amount of back-pedaling was done. Usually, the student stated that his or her college would not accept the credit, or that they would need a very high score to receive credit at their college. My perception is that students took the AP courses to be more visible to a competitive college and to increase their chance for admission. However, once that admission decision was made, it is probable that the motivation to learn in the class was substantially diminished. A few students felt that some senior teachers were assigning less work but the opinions about this were very heterogeneous.

## **V. Discussion**

A good portrait of senioritis at Beacon has been drawn. The senior class at Beacon does not perform as strongly as they did as juniors, and they are likely to not sit for the AP exam as a senior. It also seems they are less motivated to learn. The reasons for senioritis include school structure, the college admissions and acceptance process, a sense of schoolplace accountability not having relevance after graduation, and some complex social phenomena.

It seems that the seniors really need to know why the knowledge they are attempting to master as seniors is relevant to their lives, and what the capital of that knowledge really is. However,

because of the heterogeneous needs and the period being a time of transition, a very individualized degree of explanation is required. In fact, one of the successful attributes of the Beacon staff is their ability to explain to students why knowledge matters.

It appears challenging for Beacon seniors to rationally decide to work hard as a senior, perhaps because this is a challenging age for students to prioritize schooling. Some students and educators have doubted the necessity of a substantial amount of homework, and it is reasonable to consider the learning efficiency and necessity of some homework. However, a 2-hour/night homework load seems reasonable given that the seniors spend about 24 hours in school each week, on average, providing they attend all their classes. A question for our school is whether we are best accommodating our student's interests and if we are lifting their motivations as best as we can. Fortunately, we are phasing-in an improved curricula that will allow students to take alternative classes that meet rigorous learning standards and will offer choices to our students. For example, the science department is phasing in a 2-year biochemistry curricula, removing an 11<sup>th</sup>-grade chemistry sequence, and requiring elective science—some of which will be advanced science classes—in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Hopefully the provision of additional choices will increase student motivation to learn, and it is possible that our school will be able to offer some college credit.

From another standpoint, the reasons for student motivation to learn need to be much better understood. Why is it that students “tune-out” during this particular point in their lives, and will it be possible to motivate our students to achieve? One hypothesis is that additional choice will increase motivation, and there is much to learn from the student's appreciation of the international travel and community service experience in New Orleans. If students feel empowered and emboldened about their next step after high school—surely this is a daunting stage—it seems they are more likely to be motivated to learn and more likely to make good choices with respect to their next step.

It is important to note that these findings at Beacon are consistent with the report generated by the National Commission on the High School Senior Year, with regard to heterogeneous student need and varied perceptions about the transition to life after high school. The Commission report asked four questions and sought to understand: 1) whether any convergence in expectations between persons going to college and those entering the workforce after high school exists, 2) why some students need remedial coursework and why many students do not complete their postsecondary degrees, 3) more about the nature of the disconnect between students entering the workforce and college, and 4) whether K-12 changes could be made to increase after-high school achievement of graduates (National Commission, 2001).

Conley's interpretation of the Commission's recommendations clearly allows for practical implementations. The interpretations are wholly congruent with the findings made in this study. For example, Conley recommends that a new social compact be developed around the U.S. high school (Conley, 2001), which may require a cultural shift with respect to our education system and the partnerships that assist the transitional period from high school to secondary education or work. Conley's recommendation for "parents, students, school leaders, postsecondary institutions, employers (public and private), and the military..." to become involved with this structural school improvement is a strong recommendation. However, I predict that policy will have to be especially creative in order to accommodate the heterogeneous needs of our students.

Conley has noted that it will be profoundly difficult to change the structure of high schools, in part because of the dual-need for both academic and vocational preparation (Conley, 2001). I argue that the current small-schools movement and the fledgling Empowerment Zone that is the current mayoral initiative in NYC will allow some of our high schools to better address individual student needs. I encourage these schools to become unique places of learning that can be rapidly and easily identified by students and parents as the best option for the interests of each unique NYC high school student.

A more thorough study will analyze the reasons why NYC students transfer high schools. Anecdotally, Beacon students who transfer out matriculate into City-As-A School, another NYC alternative school with a very adaptive internship curriculum and a historical tendency to accept students who have not done well in traditional high school settings (DOE, 1995). In light of the recommendations made by the Committee on Educational Excellence and Testing Equity, which noted that a causal relationship between exit testing and dropouts has not been proven (Beatty et al., 2001), the existence of remedial supports may better support the high number of students in NYC and NYS that do not receive diplomas. It is reasonable to assume that the lack of motivation that the Beacon seniors experienced, at a reportedly successful high school, is much greater for students who struggle in high school and dropout. Future analysis should examine the motivation of these students who struggle.

The dropout recommendations made by Beatty, et al. (2001), which are congruent with the senioritis issue, are for: 1) improved data on the dropout population, 2) the development of comparable interstate and intrastate measures of school completion, and 3) learning why some student cohorts are more likely to dropout. Many of the issues that students face when choosing to complete school are likely to be related to student motivation. If students have a difficult time justifying their completion of high school, or understanding the validity of the process, we must listen to these needs when improving school-structure. Beatty, et al.'s report notes that small schools tend to have a smaller percentage of dropouts. My belief is that parallel to the senioritis issue, the dropout issue necessitates the accommodation of heterogeneous learning needs. From the interviews above, it is apparent that even at a comparatively selective NYC high school, Beacon seniors are thinking about education and the steps after high school with very different valuations and beliefs about whether what they are learning really "matters" to their future at this stage.



The declining GPA of Beacon seniors may include either easier-grading by the senior teachers, or consistent grading policies, comparing the grading difficulty of the earlier grades. From a broader perspective, grade-inflation is a national trend for seniors. During the past decade, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) High School Transcript Studies have revealed an inflated GPA at the end of high school (Perkins & Roey, 2004). U.S. students graduating in 1990, 1994, 1998, and 2000, respectively, have high school GPAs of 2.68, 2.79, 2.90, and 2.94, respectively (Perkins & Roey, 2004). It is important to note that the Beacon senior GPA is beneath the mean of any of these years, and that more than 90% of our students have been accepted to college. In all probability, the Beacon school is maintaining a high standard and it is possible that this level of performance stringency may partially induce a greater amount of senioritis.

## **VI. Policy Recommendations**

- Conley's recommendations about the senior year must be implemented. Especially, the 4 Commission questions must be practically addressed. States, school districts, and schools must consider these recommendations to improve their unique schoolplaces.
- Colleges must be held accountable for maintaining rigor in the senior year: Offer letters and warning letters must be made a mandatory responsibility of colleges. My recommendation is for the overall college admissions process to become streamlined and rapid, and that the dates for acceptance be moved to May of the senior year. This could be accomplished by centralizing the application process electronically so that all colleges use the same application procedure. Colleges must universally let seniors know that their performance, if diminished, has substantive consequences for them in college.
- On the school level, the requirement to take the AP exam if enrolled in the class is a structurally sound recommendation.

- Consider the NY Times, 30 May 2006: *Can't complete high school? Go straight to college*. Alternative avenues to high school need to be offered, but the high school diploma must be a universal requirement that students must be supported to obtain.
- A later exam date for the AP exams (which is regulated by The College Board), in early June for New York City public school students (the NYC school year ends in late June, instead of May as in other states), would level the value of this exam between different states and schools. This will also improve the amount of learning in these courses throughout the senior year.

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