

The 'Winter Blues' has a new name: SAD

Seasonal affective disorder affects 6% of the U.S.

by Maya Kowitz

In the midst of the dark and gloomy winters of Chicago, many students and teachers find that third quarter is the hardest time of the school year, though some have a tough time identifying why.

There are many factors that contribute to this "never-ending marathon" that is winter, according to junior Marissa Greif.

Greif said, "I honestly am just sad during winter. Christmas has passed, I have nothing to look forward to. It's three months until spring break, and everyone is irritable and ready for the weather to get nicer."

Junior Sam Lefkofsky agrees, finding it harder to focus during the months of winter, saying that the minimal daylight hours play a factor in a student's mindset during this time of year.

"I went to Alaska in the summer and it would be light until very late at night. It seemed that everyone was so positive and stayed out later because there was constant daylight," Lefkofsky said.

Lori Buckenberger, a Clinical Psychologist based in Evanston said, "The worst time of year is from



New Trier East Campus in a 2015 snow storm; weather is one cause of the many causes of SAD | Clarke

November through April because of the time change. It is darker when we get up, and darker after school. The reduced amount of light causes seasonal affective disorder."

Seasonal affective disorder, also known as SAD, is described as depression due to lack of sunlight.

"SAD begins and ends at about the same times every year. The symptoms of SAD are closely related to those of clinical depression," Buckenberger explained.

She also added that the only distinction between SAD and clinical depression is that patients with SAD usually feel this way during the short, dark days of winter.

According to the American Psychological Association, symptoms of SAD include fatigue, loss of interest, sleep difficulty,

weight gain and hopelessness or despair.

In addition, Norman Rosenthal, clinical professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University School of Medicine, wrote a blogpost on SAD on his website, stating that six percent of the U.S. population is affected by seasonal affective disorder.

Though not everyone sees a correlation between student's moods and the weather, Jude Eliacin, a Winnetka campus social worker, says that he doesn't see more or less students according to the time of year.

"What happens is when big deadlines are around the corner, that's when we see an influx of kids."

Eliacin continued to add that the new calendar and lack of days off this year will definitely take a toll

on students and staff. "We'll see how many mental health days people will take," Eliacin said.

Similarly, English teacher Ariell Bachman, believes it's hard to say lack of motivation can be specifically blamed on winter.

"Two of the three classes I teach are seniors, and by this time of year they are second semester seniors, so that's their own type of motivation issue," Bachman said.

Even though Bachman feels that winter may not be the ultimate scapegoat for student behavior and motivation third quarter, she did draw a connection to SAD.

"I think the short days are a factor and can definitely influence people's moods," Bachman said. "Especially in school, where looking through a window may be the only

exposure to the sun we receive."

Winter hits everyone hard, not just students. A science teacher at Winnetka is convinced that she has seasonal affective disorder. "During the winter, I feel like I have no energy. I love being outside; I'm a total outdoorsy person and I don't feel physically fit or active during the winter."

KW teacher and baseball coach, Mike Napoleon, shares this feeling on the necessity of staying fit and being active, despite the discouraging darkness and cold of winter, "I need to stay active during the winter, or else it's extremely easy for me to just grab the Chips Ahoy and sit around watching TV all day," Napoleon said.

If you feel like you may have symptoms of SAD or feel significantly less positive and motivated during the winter, Eliacin believes you should talk to someone. Even if your emotions aren't linked to the weather, it's important not to ignore it.

At New Trier, you can schedule a meeting with a social worker in room 215, or you can check out Erika's Lighthouse, which is run by Daniel Daly every Wednesday in room 109.

Either way, if you're feeling like you have the winter blues, SAD or not, and it's affecting your life, remember that spring is just around the corner and even in Chicago, there's blue skies and sunny days coming soon.

Balance is key when taking APs

Deciding to take an AP class depends on the student

by Gabi Schulz

With every second semester comes the stress of class registration.

Sophomores and juniors are torn when deciding between what classes to take and the arguably more important question, what level to take.

Instilled within most students is the idea that to get into the "college of your dreams" your courses need to be of the highest level.

For some people, that means overloading their schedule with an impressive course load, blind to the rigor of each class. Regardless, kids across the nation find themselves asking, "do APs really matter?"

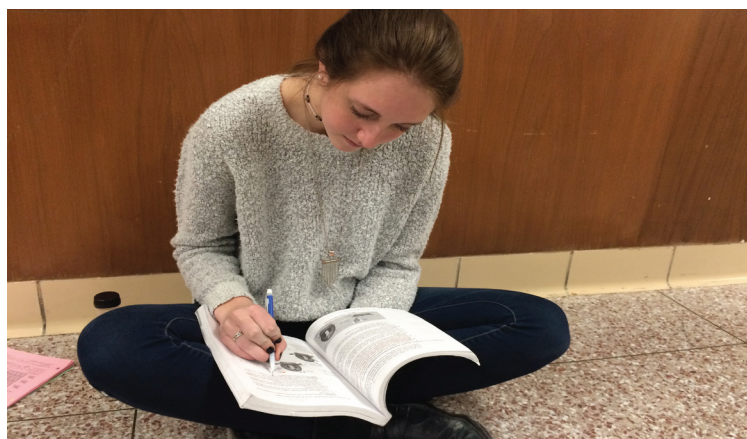
Advanced Placement, (AP) is a program run by the College Board which offers college level curriculum to high school students nationwide. By the end of the year, students have the opportunity to take an AP test which, depending on their score, may grant them course credit at many American universities.

As of 2013, 19,493 schools offered AP courses and 2,342,528 students were enrolled in them, according to the College Board.

Universities often recognize a course as completed if a student scores a four or a five on the AP test. According to the College Board's data, only 35% of juniors and 34% of seniors are scoring that high.

If the majority of AP students classes are not scoring high enough to receive course credit, many wonder if there's even a point.

For some, it's not necessarily a choice. Junior Sophie Lieberman said, "Next year I'm taking AP Calc and music theory. I'm taking pre-calc and music theory this year and the classes next year happen to be AP so I'm just staying on track. That's my



Senior Liz Sollitt studies for her AP biology class during lunch | Byrne

only option."

However, others deliberately chose to take AP classes over those at a high school level.

Lieberman added that perceived intelligence level is another factor.

"A lot of people think you're smarter if you take a lot of APs and that you'll get into a better college, but I don't think that's 100% true."

Although APs are often associated with upperclassmen, sophomores take interest as well.

Sophomore Olivia Finks said, "I've been told [APs] are important for college admissions, but I get mixed messages. Some teachers say that you should just do what you can handle, while others say you should go above and beyond."

Post high school counselor Dan Rogan agreed. "It really depends upon the types of school a student might be considering. The more selective the college, the more those types of schools would want to see a student taking the highest level possible," Rogan said.

Students often feel pressure to take higher level courses, thinking that everyone else is doing the same. In reality, Rogan explained, "the majority of students do not take APs."

One aspect of registration unique to New Trier is the level four class. Many wonder how a level four might compare to an AP on a

transcript.

According to Rogan, in terms of rigor they're essentially the same. "Colleges distinguish the APs because it's a national curriculum but at the same time they know that the four level is on the same par as the AP course."

Senior Ilana Rosenberg gives some insight as to what the classes are really like. "It depends on the course but usually APs have more work and are more of a time commitment. Also AP sciences tend to be harder than AP math classes."

Rogan also explained the dangers of spreading yourself too thin in terms of academics and the importance of being able to keep up with a demanding schedule.

"The challenge really lies in when we see students taking too many AP courses and then are struggling in those courses. Students are not going to help themselves if they're taking three AP courses and getting Cs."

In a school as distinguished as New Trier, it's easy to get lost while deciding what classes to take, but the most important thing is doing what's right for you.

"At New Trier we really stress balance and what that means is that it's a different picture for every student. We want to see students challenging themselves but also succeeding, and colleges are the same way," Rogan said.

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The test was initially started in California as a way to show the abilities that people who speak English as a second language have to offer. Now, however, it is implemented to show the qualification of anybody that can speak as least two languages.

"It is so awesome that New Trier is able to provide this to its students. New Trier does an especially good job of making sure that its students are prepared to succeed," junior Orin Gilchrist said.

New Trier is one of only three schools in the state that will be implementing the test this year. Starck-King believes it is important

to offer, because it will give New Trier's students an advantage. "It shows employers and colleges that not only did you get an A or B in a language class, but you can use it and hold your own in a job or other setting in which you would need to use this language. That is something that would catch anyone's eye."

However, Starck-King hopes that a mark on an application isn't the only reason students take the test.

"We hope our students are lifelong learners of their chosen language because communication is the most important part of being a world citizen."

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People want to in other countries and can't so I think that I should take the privilege that I have."

Senior Ellie Kalman, who also plans to vote, agreed with McGuinness. "It is a right that not a lot of people in this world are granted even though they should be," Kalman said.

Kalman explained that if you don't vote, "you're not respecting or appreciating the freedom that you have by living in this country."

However Kalman isn't sure if many of her peers will vote. "It's kind of a hassle and voting isn't one of those things that's seen as respecting your right."

Especially after Martin Luther King Day where barely anyone showed up, I'm kind of disenchanted with the people in my grade," Kalman said.

Catherine Mowery is a senior who will definitely vote. "We live in this country and we want to have a say in what this country does and who runs it," she explained.

Mowery actively follows the election because she finds politics really interesting. But she also does it because she wants to know

where each of the candidates stand on different issues in order to make the most informed voting decision possible.

She added that even if her peers don't actively follow the election, they most likely still know the gist of what's going on. "Especially in this election, it's kind of hard not to know what's going on because there is Donald Trump and there's a lot of press around him. So I think that even if they don't consciously follow it, they're still exposed to it," Mowery said.

Senior Ida Justesen agreed with Mowery's point. She said that she doesn't always keep up with the candidates in the news but that it can be valuable to talk to others about them. "Everyone picks up different pieces of information and then when you talk about it, you can put together the whole piece," Justesen said.

Although Justesen can't vote because she only has the Danish citizenship, she said that she definitely would vote if she could.

Justesen said, "It's your own way of making your opinion matter."