

MCL department introduces LPA assessment in place of final

Students and staff find the new LPA format favorable and beneficial

by Darcie Kim

The MCL department has replaced the traditional final with a Language Performance Assessment (LPA), which appears to be widely beneficial.

Originally, the MCL final was administered during a regular 90 minute testing period of finals week. The majority of the test was multiple choice, a format that many teachers considered restricting.

As a result of this limitation, many teachers administered the speaking or listening parts of the final days before the actual test.

"In years past we've been constrained to the 90 minute time period, and then a quick turnaround to get exams back, so that made it difficult to have students write or speak in any kind of extended way," French teacher Judy Weiss said.

"Even if we wanted to test students

on listening or speaking, we couldn't do it in the time frame because of proctors and technology issues."

According to Spanish teacher Tonya Piscitello, the MCL teachers were unable to test a spectrum of skills in the final, because the format was primarily multiple choice with minimal short answer.

"Essentially, when you look at a [multiple] choice, it's item analysis. You're not really being asked to produce the language. We would really like to know what our students have learned, and I can't know what you've learned by just item analysis per se," said Piscitello.

There are a few significant differences between the LPA and the traditional MCL final.

First, the LPA was before winter break and all of the other core final exams, so MCL students did not have to take a language exam during the week of regular finals.

Students seemed to enjoy taking the LPA earlier, and among students and teachers, the general consensus seemed to be that the LPA was less stressful because of the timing.

"I definitely like having the LPA before finals because it lowers the stress for the language exam and helps open up the rest of finals



New Trier students take the Language Performance Assessment before winter break replacing the normal final | Zervas

week so you can focus on other classes," senior Danny Fay said.

Students also felt that the exam was more relevant to the recent class material, and that the exam was overall easier to handle.

Senior Bridget Carmody said she liked the new assessment because, "it was less stress about worrying about the final. The final itself felt more manageable, and I think that's because [the teachers] were forced to fit the final into two or three class days."

This LPA also gave teachers the flexibility to decide what format they would use to test students on their knowledge.

"For example, some teachers

gave projects. For other teachers, they gave the same kind of test with listening, speaking, and writing, but in a way that was more global, without nitpicky questions," said Piscitello.

During the week before finals, most language classes resumed their curriculum, with lighter loads of homework and classwork.

"In the time before all of our normal finals, my class moved on with our classwork but it was definitely lighter than usual," Helen Kuhn said.

"We didn't have any tests or quizzes, which I think is because our teacher didn't want to give us extra

work on top of studying for finals,"

To gain a more detailed understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the LPA, the MCL department gave students and faculty a survey asking opinions on the new exam.

While the results have not been finalized, informal discussions in class led to the overall agreement that the LPA was a better experience than the traditional MCL final.

As Piscitello put it, "[The LPA] is showcasing your semester and what you know, which is something that the MCL final didn't do."

Breitbart attacks New Trier seminar day

Alt-right website criticized the race based seminar day the past two years

by Maggie Curry

On Jan. 15, Breitbart News Network published an article about New Trier's all-school seminar day headlined "Suburban Chicago School Teaches 'Blackenomics,' 'Trans-Rights,' and 'White Genocide Against Blacks.'"

Writer Warner Todd Huston said in the article, "along with teaching math, science, English, and history, the school is launching into a major left-wing indoctrination project based on Obama's agenda of liberal activism."

Breitbart has published several articles written about the seminar day that took place last year on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

On Jan. 12 of last year, reporter Joel B. Pollak wrote, "Other area schools-- including Evanston Township High School, which has the largest percentage of black students of any high school on the North Shore-- will be closed for the holiday, as usual."

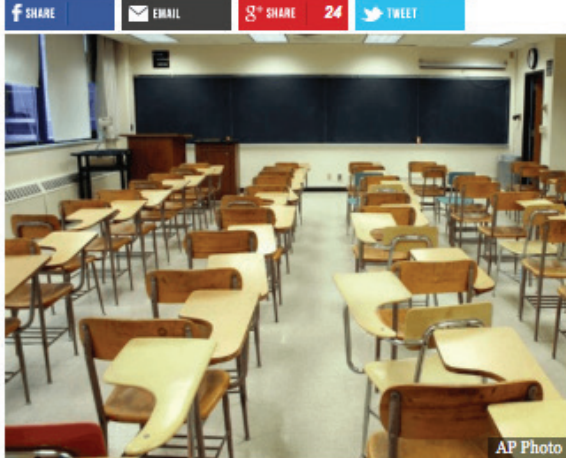
Speech and Debate teacher Aaron Vinson is part of the workshop committee that reviews all the proposals from teachers and students for the all-school seminar day. About Obama's "re-education project," he said, "The federal government doesn't really have a large input on curricular decisions."

Huston used the term "re-education project" in the article to characterize the seminar day.

Vinson explained that the 2016 seminar day was held because last year the schedule was modified due to construction. There were several holidays that the school no longer had off, including MLK Day.

The school decided to make the attendance day a seminar day rather than a normal schedule day for both years. According to Vinson, "Over the last few years, there have been a few incidents that illustrated that our population wasn't really well versed in issues relating to racial diversity, that some of our

SUBURBAN CHICAGO SCHOOL TEACHES 'BLACKENOMICS,' 'TRANS-RIGHTS,' AND 'WHITE GENOCIDE AGAINST BLACKS'



The article was featured on Breitbart's website on Jan. 15 | Breitbart

students sometimes displayed a lack of sensitivity and awareness in terms of interacting with people of color, and the day was an attempt to promote awareness, not guilt."

Huston also went on to pick out a Northfield Seminar, saying, "even the smallest children will be targeted for Obama's re-education project with a program called 'Developing Empathy and Acceptance by Reading Picture Books to Children.'"

This course was summarized in the Workshop Catalog as an opportunity to read picture books focusing on themes of diversity to young children in the Northfield Campus's library.

Dance teacher and Seminar Day Committee member Lucy Riner explained that many of the lessons people learn as children show them how to treat one another.

"From a humanitarian perspective, going back and reiterating some of those lessons you had as a small child now that you're growing up is a way to remind yourself that we're still practicing and learning about people and diversity and being good human beings," said Riner.

Pollak also quoted an anonymous parent in his article that said, "They are supposed to be a neutral environment. Yet they are pushing all this 'white guilt,' using our kids for their own agenda, twisting their minds--

whether it be sexual or racial."

About all these opinions surrounding last year's seminar as well as the upcoming all-school seminar, senior Celia Buckman said, "I think people are against the day because it's so different from business-as-usual. This is bound to create some disagreement. It's also difficult to admit to having privileges--whether that's based in race, income, or sexuality. As a white person, I don't realize the way my race affects my everyday life until I'm presented with the experiences and perspective of a non-white person. Having real conversations, presented with privileges, isn't easy."

A second article was written by Pollak last year in response to a post on the Huffington Post from Buckman in defense of the MLK Seminar day headlined: "Check Your Privilege, Rich White Leftist Girl."

In the Jan. 17th 2016 article response to Buckman, Pollak described the seminar day as an "elitist, racist farce New Trier is staging this year." He also described the day as "an elaborate ritual of guilt."

In response to Huston's article, Buckman said, "It assumes that New Trier is simply creating a nebulous 'liberal agenda,' when really the seminars are based in history and facts-- Breitbart writers mistaken perspectives that are often ignored in our educational systems as simply being wrong."

Vaping trend still strong

Vaping has revived smoking culture among students

by Danny Kogan

Cigarettes have long been taboo among New Trier students, but the introduction of vapes into our culture has allowed students to view smoking as stylish.

The vaping industry has argued that vapes are healthy substitutes to smoking, and claim that vaping can reduce smoking temptations, leading to vapes being marketed as smoking cessation products.

Senior Nicole Katz said, "Vapes can help kids not get addicted to smoking, but I think it's kind of stupid if you're using it just to look cool."

In the hallways of New Trier, the use of vaping is increasing.

A survey conducted from 2011-2012 by the US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health found that "only 1% of respondents used liquid without nicotine," revealing that the vast majority of people use nicotine in their vapes.

"This year we've noticed vapes being used inside of school, but it really only comes to your attention when someone tells you something or someone is acting a particular way on campus," New Trier Principal Denise Dubravec said.

This year, Cook County and the city of Chicago passed laws restricting ways people can purchase vapes and cigarettes.

A person must now be 21, instead of 18, in order to purchase cigarettes within the boundaries of Cook County. Legislators believe this will assist in decreasing nicotine use among underage smokers, as many 18 year olds buy nicotine products for their younger friends.

"I've seen students vape during extra-curricular games, inside the hallways, and even classes," said Senior Susan Mogck.

As people have started questioning the legitimacy of vapes, the act of vaping has become taboo,

following the legacy of cigarettes. But the efforts to decrease the use of Nicotine may be too late.

In 2015 the Juul vaporizer was released. Juul's are small, discreet eCigs that resemble USB flash drives. Many teenagers and adults have started to use Juuls to hide their addiction to eCigs.

"Juuls are a genius of marketing. As vapes were starting to become unpopular the Juul came into the picture and pretty much allowed people to vape discreetly, and safe from the judgements of others," said Katz.

While there has not been enough time to understand the effects of vaporizers in the long term, many worry that the rise of vaporizers has allowed teenagers and adults to view cigarette smoking as socially acceptable.

"I think people can make their own decisions but they should also know how the product works and what chemicals they're putting in their body," said junior Kelsey Ortega.

Some students agree that vaping is distracting. "I saw a kid in my class prank the teacher by pretending he was Juuling. He put his fist over his mouth, and started to cough, but when the teacher threatened to send him to the adviser chair, he opened up his fist and showed that there was nothing in his hand," said senior Tatum Macklin.

The vast majority move on to vaping with nicotine, neglecting the health risks that come with it. "We have highly educated kids at New Trier, who think about the risks and the consequences of their actions. I hope our kids use their intelligence not just in the classroom, but in everyday decisions that they make," said Dubravec.

Students believe this is simply a trend, "Gone are the middle school days when Webkinz were the main trend. Vaping has become New Trier's fad, but I think it will become unpopular eventually," said Katz.

This generation was on track to become the first generation to end smoking, but this is no longer the case. Vaping has become a hidden epidemic deeply rooted in high school society.