

AP English classes expose gender disparity

BY: PAYTON OBERMYER
TRENDING EDITOR

Walking into an English class at Mira Costa, students may notice a major difference depending on whether the class is AP (advanced placement) or CP (college preparatory). This year, girls make up a much larger number of students in AP English classes, including AP English Language and Composition and AP Literature, while boys severely outnumber girls in CP English classes. A gender divide like this raises questions about why such a large difference exists.

The pattern is seen in teacher Keely Sweeny's CP English 11 classes. Her first period has eight girls out of 31 students, her second has ten girls out of 31 students and her fifth period has 13 girls out of 32 students. Although these numbers vary, boys significantly outnumber girls in every one of Sweeny's classes surveyed.

Teacher Quincy Backer, who teaches both AP Language and Composition and CP English 11, has also noticed the large gender gap with her CP classes. All of her CP periods have significantly more girls than boys, a pattern she believes could connect to the way certain subjects are associated with gender.

"My theory is that the STEM classes are kind of seen as more male dominated and 'female' AP classes are the humanities," Backer said.

Her observation points to a larger issue surrounding gender and academics. Certain subjects can become associated with boys or girls, even though a student's gender has nothing to do with

class, I've noticed that boys are less likely to purposefully sit in the front and participate. They seem to be more likely to forget upcoming assignments and tests. Is the teen male expectation to be "non-

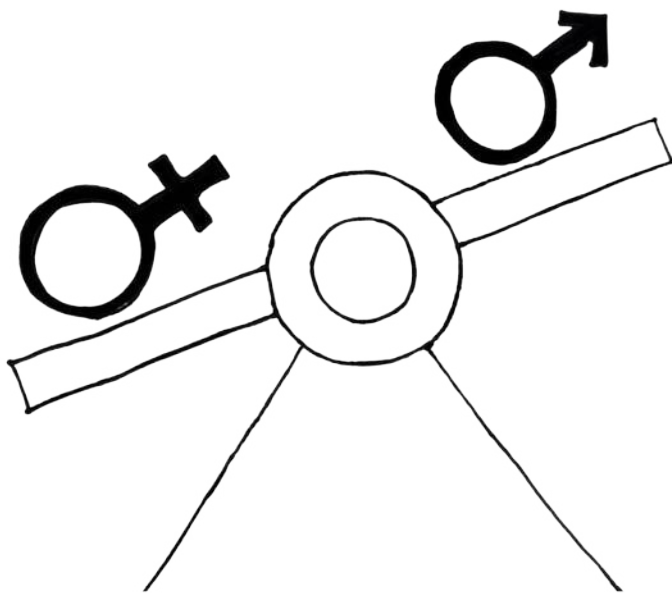


ILLUSTRATION BY
VANESSA MASTERSON

their ability to succeed in that course.

To counteract historic male domination in the classroom, girls were heavily encouraged to raise their hands, take harder classes, and receive extra support to succeed. It could be possible that boys have felt blindsided and unsure of what to do with themselves in school since this shift, and the problem may have been overcorrected. In my AP Literature

class, I've noticed that boys are less likely to purposefully sit in the front and participate. They seem to be more likely to forget upcoming assignments and tests. Is the teen male expectation to be "non-

chalant," and even borderline anti-feminist playing into their disinterest in higher level humanities courses, where more political, gender and sexuality driven conversations take place? "I never really thought about the gender divides in AP Lang because it doesn't feel super noticeable when you're actually in the class," junior Aliya Lim said. "But I do feel like there are generally more girls than boys."

While AP Seminar is classified as an elective at Costa, many colleges count it as another year of AP English. AP Seminar teacher Lindsey Valbuena can't help but see the same inequality.

"In my first period AP Seminar class, there are 24 girls and 12 boys. I wonder if, as teachers, we're pitching these classes in a way that is non-desirable to certain populations," Valbuena said. "I don't necessarily have a solution, but I do want all genders to feel equally capable of accelerating in AP English courses."

Valbuena brings up an interesting point. In 10th grade, when students are selecting their courses for 11th grade English, the books and lessons described for AP may seem more feminine and more desirable for girls. Besides, at the age of 14 or 15, the herd mentality is at an all time high: If one male or female student has an idea of which is the superior 11th grade English class, others of the same gender may follow.

The reason behind this imbalance remains unclear, but that doesn't mean it should be overlooked or ignored. The gender gap does not suggest that boys are less capable of succeeding in advanced English or that girls are naturally better at the subject. Instead, it shows a noticeable pattern within Costa's English classes that deserves more attention.

Excused fifth periods leave senior quad empty by lunch

BY: GENEVA HUANG
MANAGING EDITOR

Maybe it's my fault for signing up for a zero-through-five, and trust me, I thought about cutting it off at fourth. However, I didn't think lunch would be that bad, seeing how last year's Senior Quad was still bustling at lunch; This year marks a turning point in terms of senior scheduling: Almost every senior who asked for a zero through four had their requests met.

As someone still here during lunch, let me remind you what the Senior Quad looks like during that time. The difference between the Senior Quad during nutrition and lunch is night and day. What is bustling full of students in the morning, is practically every table vacant at lunch time.

Teacher Lindsey Valbuena whose in room 102, directly faces the Senior Quad, witnesses this phenomenon directly. She questions "what

are fifth and sixth period even for, with so many students leaving?" As Yearbook Advisor, Valbuena finds it "frustrating, and incredibly hard to locate seniors for pictures and yearbook quotes at lunch, because they simply tend to not be on campus."

During fifth period, there are two senior English classes and zero senior Social Science classes, with a few science and arts classes that could have seniors too. That can be compared to the four eleventh grade, three English 10, four English 9, three 10th grade History, and two 11th grade History classes.

"I didn't have a fifth period last year, so it's a bit hard adjusting to it," said Georgia Fluker, a fifth period senior. "It's very isolating for the seniors because it genuinely feels like there is nobody here."

I'm not necessarily writing this to advocate for future se-

niors to take a fifth period. In fact, getting out of school around 1 PM every day sounds like a dream. Even is before the senioritis has kicked in. I'm only seeking to draw attention to what kind of precedent this sets and how it affects campus culture.

ASB senior Samantha Nammack did not originally plan on having a fifth. But, when the ASB faculty shift occurred this year, administration decided to no longer offer ASB both fourth and fifth period, but only fifth. This change forced all ASB seniors to either drop ASB, or enroll fifth period, including Nammack.

"I was looking forward to leaving at lunch this year, as I am committed to college for Beach Volleyball and wanted it to be my main focus after a shorter school day," Nammack said. "However, ASB is also really important to me, so I surely didn't want

to drop it this year either. I wouldn't really care about staying for ASB if it was directly after fourth period, but having to also stay for lunch is just annoying; it is time I could be using doing other things."

It isn't unusual for seniors to have fewer class periods than underclassmen. Our neighbors at South High School pretty much have the same system, where seniors leave one period earlier than the rest. The only difference is that this early release takes place after lunch, a structure that allows campus culture to remain relatively animated.

Throughout the years, the amount of Costa seniors ending their day at fourth period has certainly increased. This year, a quarter of the students not at school during lunch, the campus feels less like a community, and a little more like a place people simply pass through.



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So What?

BY: GENEVA HUANG
MANAGING EDITOR

Trump's clash with the mail-in ballot system: The U.S. Postal Service claims it has stopped developing a computer system that would help the president limit mail-in voting. Trump continues to defy Supreme Court orders that limit his attempt to assert federal control over state-managed elections.

So what? Redistricting was the first step in voter suppression. We saw this play out last year. Voter ID is the next step. Think of Voter ID as a poll tax, or a way to disenfranchise particular communities. Individuals without a reliable source of transportation or sufficient time to go out of their way to get an ID and travel to a poll site suddenly lose a major avenue for participating in democracy.

Under Trump, the federal government expanded the use of the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) database, which the Department of Homeland Security uses to help federal, state, and local agencies verify immigration status and determine eligibility for certain government benefits. Last year, Trump directed changes that broadened the system's capabilities, allowing election officials to conduct large-scale searches.

One eerie provision under this act is that the name on your ID must match your birth name. So, people who have changed their birth name or maiden name would be flagged in the system. This results in the disenfranchisement of women.

Members of minority communities are another group that tends to change their names and adopt Anglicized or Americanized names. The result? A voting pool that is far less diverse and fails to properly reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the American population.

In the 2022 midterm election cycle, nearly a third of Americans who cast a ballot did so by mail and accounted for more than 35 million votes. A few weeks ago, 1.2 million people in Texas had their votes suspended on the basis that their addresses were outdated. Many don't even know they make this list until the deadline has long passed.

Only time will tell how the 2026 midterm election cycle will pan out. Until next time!