

UNIT 2: Maintaining the Momentum: Avoiding the Senior Slump
ACTIVITY 1: Taking Off and Landing
GRADE: 12

ramp-up to
READINESS™

The idea of a “senior slump” is deeply ingrained in American high school culture, but research shows that when students lose their academic momentum during senior year, they often do not regain it and start college less prepared than they need to be. This series of advisory lessons is intended to warn students of the danger of embracing the senior slump.

Objective: Students begin to understand that endings and beginnings are complicated and important points in every process.

Resources Needed for this Activity:

- Optional handout of USA Today column below

Opening: 10 minutes - The advisor begins the session by asking students if they know what is the most dangerous time in an airplane flight. The students are given a chance to consider an answer, perhaps through briefly talking to another student. The advisor calls on students to share their responses to the question.

The advisor then reads, puts on screen, or hands out this quote from the USA Today column, “Ask the Captain” by United Airlines pilot Captain Meryl Getline:

Question: Is it true that takeoff and landing are the most dangerous parts of flying? If so, why? — Laura Black, Cincinnati

Answer: Yes, and statistics bear this out. Takeoff and landing is where all the action is; it's when we are the busiest.

Once we're in the air, the plane is stabilized, and, frankly, there's not much for us to do except monitor the controls and deal with anything that might come up. Takeoffs and landings are complex maneuvers by comparison.

And an engine loss at cruise altitude might not even be noticed by passengers, but at low altitude or on takeoff, it's a skilled maneuver to keep the plane airborne and safe.

We also have to keep an eye out for traffic, which is far more congested at lower altitudes because small airplanes don't fly where jets do.

Landings are always a challenge, but especially during severe weather conditions, such as high, gusty winds, heavy rain or snow, or low visibility.

Taken from: http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/travel/columnist/getline/2004-11-08-ask-the-captain_x.htm

Activity: 10 minutes - The advisor asks students if they are on the take-off, flight or landing of their high school careers.

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When students respond that they are on or near the landing, the advisor asks students if they think the same logic that applies to airplanes applies to high school students. In other words, is the start or the ending the most dangerous part? The advisor lets students comment on similarities and differences between the start and end of an airplane flight and the start and end of high school.

The advisor should then give the following mini lecture.

Some studies have found that the subject in high school that best predicts how students will do at a four-year college or university is mathematics. (Reference: Clifford Adelman's Answers in the Toolbox and The Toolbox Revisited studies).

- That is also true of many community and technical college programs.
- This is because math is so important to so many fields today, not just things like engineering and computer science, but also things like welding, auto mechanics, design and even subjects in the humanities like history, where math is used to analyze data and look for patterns.
- Many postsecondary institutions require students to take and pass a mathematics course such as a college algebra course at the start of their college careers.
- Many postsecondary institutions-including two-year institutions-require students to pass a placement test to get into that required math course (and other classes) or to prove that they do not need to take it.
- If students cannot pass that placement test, then they need to retake high school math or other classes at the postsecondary institution. Those classes are usually called developmental and are sometimes called remedial. They cost tuition and use students' scholarship or loan funding but they do not earn college credit. They are a way of catching up on what students were supposed to learn in high school.
- Other studies suggest that if you need to take these developmental courses in college, your chances of actually finishing college are lower. There could be lots of reasons for that, but it is safe to say that if it's possible to avoid taking developmental courses in college, it's a good idea to avoid them.
- In Minnesota, the subject that most students at two and four-year colleges need to take developmental courses in is math (Reference: Minnesota Measures 2012. Available at <http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/MinnesotaMeasures2012.pdf>).
- Now this brings us to the question of the senior year and the senior slump. Minnesota currently only requires students to take three years of math in high school to graduate. This means that because not everyone loves math, many students chose not to take math their senior year.
- On one hand, this makes sense and the State of Minnesota says it's OK. But if you plan to go to college and you want to do well there, it may not be a very good idea. Think of it this way: are your skills in mathematics so strong that

you can take a full year and two summers off of mathematics and then show up at college ready to do college-level math?

- If you really don't want to take a traditional math class your senior year, it would make sense to at least take some type of class that will keep your math skills strong, such as statistics or quantitative reasoning.
- Math is just one example of ways students engage in the senior slump. The same type of decline in readiness for postsecondary education can occur in writing longer papers, reading challenging books, completing science labs, or just maintaining good study habits.
- Senior year is actually the time to maintain your academic momentum - not slack off or slump!

Closure: 5 minutes -The advisor should conclude the session by asking students what they see as "senior slump behavior" from their perspective. The advisor should record these for use in the next session. The advisor should tell the students that during the next advisory session they will talk about some ways to enjoy the senior year of high school without getting caught in the senior slump