

Stanford Survey of Adolescent School Experience  
Palo Alto High School

*What causes you the most stress and why?*

Total number of students surveyed: 1440

Number of students who responded to this question: 1356

**Answer indicates little/no stress: 28**

**Answer indicates stress: 1328**

CODE	FREQUENCY	STUDENT %	EXAMPLES
School or school workload	255	18.8%	School is the most stressful thing. It just always feels like I have things that I need to start and finish and have difficult tests. School, because I feel like I can't be a teenager and enjoy my younger years because I spend a ton of time on schoolwork. School, because it has a huge impact on the rest of my life. The sudden amount of school work in comparison to middle school.
Homework	242	17.8%	The amount of homework I have to do because when I spend hours every night doing it, I don't get a lot of sleep, then I'm exhausted for the entire week and feel stressed throughout. My homework is taking me longer than it should. Homework because it is hard for me to keep track of it sometimes and I forget to do some of it. Having homework about a topic that isn't thoroughly explained or I don't completely understand.
College	154	11.4%	I have worked my entire life for college, and if I don't get into one of my top choices, I will be very disappointed. I feel like there might not be a school that is perfect for me, and I'm constantly nervous that I won't make it into a college that is the closest to flawless for me. I'm afraid I won't live up to my full potential and won't get into a good school just because I don't have a good enough essay or something stupid like that. I want to leave this experience knowing I did everything I could to get into the best college for me, but it's really stressful balancing my time.

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Balancing time for all I have to do	148	9.2%	I put a lot of time in soccer and school and sometimes those two things collide. The most stressful thing in my life is trying to find the time to do all my schoolwork while trying to play a sport. In my life, what causes the most stress would be balancing homework and social life. There is never enough time to do homework do sports and still have time to be social and hang out with friends.
Extracurricular activities	137	10.1%	Volleyball...because it is very competitive and takes up the majority of my free time. Being the worst player on the Varsity water polo team. Hockey, because I do not really want to be playing but my dad made me. It causes me stress to stay up late, play an instrument, play a competitive school sport, be in student government, be involved in 3 other school clubs, learn 2 other languages, and balance my social life.
Grades	133	9.8%	When I get a bad grade, I feel like there was no point and why bother. Feeling intellectually inadequate as a result of scoring below the mean/median score in the class on assignments and other things. If I don't get good grades my parents will get angry at me and take away privileges, such as use of my phone and computer. I think that I am still adjusting to high school, and having half B's and half A's isn't all that bad in my mind.
Test taking	117	8.6%	I get really bad test anxiety and that results in me not doing as well as I could have done. Tests cause a lot of stress, because they are the most weighted part of the grade. Whether I will get an opportunity to try again if I mess up on a test.
Specific class	91	6.7%	Math, because it is my worst grade and the hardest subject for me. I am being challenged in math for the first time in my life and I am worried my grades will drop because although I prefer being challenged, I have never had to study for tests before. APUSH has a lot of reading that eats up a lot of my time.

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Friends/Peers	68	5.0%	I've been having some conflicts in my friend group, and that only adds to the stress. The school is too big, and it is extremely hard to meet people here. Paly is very cliquey and it's hard to find the right group.
Family	57	4.2%	I love my family, but my mom and stepdad are always fighting, but I think it's normal with the financial situation we are in right now. Someone in my family dealing with drug addiction problems, which causes arguments. When parents are stressed from work, they sometimes take it out on kids.
Parental pressure	56	4.1%	My parents' expectations are unrealistically high. My mom. She expects me to either get accepted into Harvard or Stanford, any other college is unacceptable and she will disown me and cut off all ties with me. Heavy expectation of my parents to excel in school and in extracurricular activities.
Competition	51	3.8%	I feel like people talk a lot about test scores and colleges they are applying to and brag about it so it can be stressful when everyone talks solely about school and the future. Feeling the need to compete with my other peers. I have several friends who just talk about grades and tests, while I don't even want to discuss anything like that. I wish that everyone could just talk about other things not relating to who gets the best test scores.
Getting Sleep	46	3.4%	Insomnia. The amount of work I have to do also means I get less sleep, which makes the time I'm working less efficient, which leads to a downward spiral where I'm just stressed and miserable. I have to wake up at 4:30 a.m. almost every day and then have to go to school. Sometimes I'm too tired to participate in class discussions.
Teacher quality	39	2.9%	I have a very hard math teacher that doesn't know how to teach a class correctly, and he is also not understanding at all and gives a lot of his students a hard time. Some teachers are stubborn and let their personal problems affect their mood and how generous they are.

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Thinking about the future	38	2.8%	My future is so unclear. I don't know what to do in my future and I don't know if I'm making the right decisions. We strive to get good grades to get into a good college which is then followed up by adulthood. Right now, school is the foundation and if that foundation is built poorly with bad grades and bad attendance, then the rest of the building will fall.
Standardized tests	35	2.6%	The SAT is coming up and college basically hinges on that. SAT because I really need to do well.
Many tests or assignments at one time	30	2.2%	I often have many tests and projects due all around the same time which causes frequent periods of high stress. When homework from many subjects piles up, it can be stressful, trying to remember what the guidelines and due dates and grading systems are for each assignment. It's like a tsunami, first there is barely anything so you think you are fine, but then you look back and there is a wave ready to crush you.
AP classes	28	2.1%	This year I'm in AP Calculus, so it's harder than ever before. I'm in AB Calc and I always feel drowned out by the loud kids who are super good at math. I am taking many honors and AP classes, and I feel overwhelmed with the amount of work that I must complete.
Motivation or engagement	26	1.9%	Some of school seems repetitive and useless, creating unnecessary stress. I don't put in as much time and effort as I should into my schoolwork and it's showing in one of my classes. I don't have the motivation to do things, I procrastinate a lot.
Health or learning challenges	23	1.7%	Chronic pain and ongoing medical disorders. My own problems with anxiety disorder. Recovering from an eating disorder.
Understanding material	23	1.7%	Homework about a topic that isn't thoroughly explained or I don't completely understand. I don't understand a lot, and I have to ask others for help.

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Essays or large assignments	21	1.5%	Papers, because they are very time consuming and worth a lot of points towards your grade. Writing assignments. They take a good amount of time and most teachers expect a lot from you. Each teacher also grades differently.
Personal issues	21	1.5%	I have some problems in my personal life. This is upsetting because I really want to do well but sometimes get distracted.
Organization	20	1.5%	I have a bad memory and often forget things. I have other things to do outside of school, so it's hard for me to keep track of everything.

**Interesting Answers (already coded but included for further consideration)**

- The worries of the students around me, because it seems as if a lot of students have a hard time relaxing and just having fun.
- I don't feel like that I have a lot of life skills, so I have to get good grade to get to a good college to learn some life skills there.
- College, school, grades, test scores, family, friends, relationships, medication, appearance because these all affect my future and the decisions I make now will influence my life, and I do not always know what I want to do. It is scary to also feel like a failure and that you are not good enough.
- Paly is trying to control everything about my life without even knowing my name or checking in with me.
- I am taking honors classes, and a lot of the kids seem really smart, so when I ask them questions they disregard it or look at me with their eyes almost saying "how could you not already know this?" A lot of them already took this class over the summer, or have a tutor. FYI, a lot of kids use the summer to take the courses for the following year, so they can be ahead, ultimately leading the teacher to think the class is already knows everything. Though this is not the case...so they struggle for the whole year.