

Stanford Survey of Adolescent School Experience  
Palo Alto High School

*What if anything could be done at your school to relieve your stress?*

Total number of students surveyed: 1440

Number of students who responded to this question: 1326

Number of "I don't know" responses: 25

CODE	FREQUENCY	STUDENT %	EXAMPLES
Less homework	354	26.7%	No homework on weekends. It hurts my head when I need the most rest. Homework extends the school day into the evening. Less homework, but that won't happen. Even if there was a school wide policy, somehow teachers would find a way to assign crushing amounts of homework. Please fix issues with homework load, and evaluate the REAL time a student is able to spend on the homework.
Nothing	140	10.6%	There's nothing they can do. Nothing can be done. I think the education system itself is pretty flawed and changing little things in each district or school won't really help.
Opportunities to review or complete work during school	132	10.0%	More time in class to work on homework, so we can ask our teacher questions. If I could work on most of my assignments during school. Maybe minimizing time on classes and adding in time like tutorial so we can get help on something that is confusing. More tutorial time.
Better communication with students	127	9.6%	Students should be able to set up appointments with their teachers. Therefore, if students were more aware of when they could talk to teachers and teachers were more open to having the college equivalent of "office hours" that would be helpful. Walk us through the process, instead of just leaving us on our own.
Coordinate deadlines for projects, tests and assignments	118	8.9%	Maybe the teachers should arrange were there would only be at the most two tests in a day. Teachers should look at students' schedules to plan for big exams and projects to prevent big assignments being due on the same day Teachers getting together and figuring out when to have tests so students can't have multiple tests on the same day.
Stress is my own responsibility	85	6.4%	For me stress is caused by me and me only. High school is supposed to be stressful so that students can learn to deal with it before they go into college and start working. I dug this hole, I don't deserve to have my stress relieved.

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Reduce tests	69	5.2%	I think we should have fewer tests. I feel like tests are responsible for 80% of our stress, especially when stuff piles up. Lessen the fear of tests. Tests shouldn't be the only thing that make up your grade.
Emphasize learning or understanding	65	4.9%	Aim more towards helping students understand the material, not just following an agenda and penalizing those who can't keep up. Making sure everyone understands what the teacher is teaching would help because then school would not be as hard. Focusing on learning subjects instead of short memorization in response to a test or quiz.
Help with the college application process	65	4.9%	Spend extensive time on college essay instruction and workshops. Classes to help students with college apps and give guidance. I think that if the juniors could have some kind of college meeting that took off some stress and just kinda simply introduced us to schools that would be nice. Taking class time to go over college apps to make it less stressful.
School schedule	62	4.7%	I would be OK with school getting out at 4, if we started at 8:45 or 9:00. Longer tutorial and having it in the middle of the day instead of at the end so the things you need to do for your classes doesn't stack up during tutorial. Flex days for classes help relieve some stress.
More interesting or meaningful work	61	4.6%	More relevant work, but less of it. I feel that math is a hard subject to teach and learn because there is not much engaging and hands-on stuff you can do with math, but I wish it was a bit more engaging because then I feel my grades would go up. Don't have such mundane homework--bring life to the assignments.
Improve teacher or administrator quality	59	4.4%	Get rid of the teachers that don't care about us. I think that having a clear teaching philosophy, class structure and expectations of students could help relieve my stress. Administration could start putting students in front of themselves.
Deemphasize grades	57	4.3%	Figure out a way to put less importance on the letter grade and more on actually learning. Less emphasis on grades, more on self-improvement and impacting others. Less pressure to get straight A's.
More time	55	4.1%	Give us more time to do our outside work and to please go slower with the material. If there were more hours in a day so I could sleep and get work done. It's either one or the other these days.

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Reduce competition	52	3.9%	Less competitive atmosphere. The majority of students in upper lane classes are exceedingly competitive. Creating a less competitive environment among students and shifting the mindset of our school community to focus less on ranking students based on often times superficial letters and more on genuine, productive learning.
Provide recreation or relaxation activities	47	3.5%	Exercises and meditation can help relieve most of the stress. What would be really nice and relaxing is if we had a day where we could watch a funny video in the beginning or end of class to take our minds off of what's going on. More spirit days out of the school year.
More positive school climate	45	3.4%	Palo Alto High School works really hard to alleviate stress, but I think that the majority it comes from the culture of the school. The school should be actively working to help students, parents, teachers, etc. realize that extreme academic success does not equate to overall life success and that being better than everyone else isn't the point of school.
Opportunities for extra credit or extensions	43	3.2%	Soft homework deadlines, lenient with students not being ready for a test. Lots of easy extra credit opportunities to raise my grade. Opportunities to get extensions on assignments, homework, or tests.
More time for extracurricular activities	29	2.2%	I do not want to quit cross country since I like the sport and I am not going to quit soccer. I want extracurricular activities and sports to communicate with each other so that it's possible to accommodate many students.
More emotional support	27	2.0%	Group therapy or something where students can be understood. An effort should be made to support the students and create a unified community so that when they are overloaded and stressed, they have a group to talk to, people to go to, and they still feel welcome and happy at this school. The student should be able to talk to teacher advisors one on one about how they are feeling.
Make work or tests easier	26	2.0%	Make statistics a little easier. I know the classes in the PAUSD district are much harder than any other schools in America, so I think kids would benefit if the classes were a bit easier.
More independence	26	2.0%	I think the school should provide more independent study. I believe much stress would be gone if they stopped telling me when to do everything when I already know when and how to do my work.

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More time for family or friends	25	1.9%	I would like to use my time at home as time to reflect, relax, and spend with my family. I spend almost an entire day of the weekend doing school-related activities when I should be playing with my little sister or walking the dog or spending time with family. Having less homework would help because then I would have more time to spend with family and friends during the week.
More time for sleep	22	1.7%	Right now I have no time for anything and I am staying up very late to finish things and it's not healthy for my body.

**Interesting suggestions:**

- A time management class would be helpful.
- More learning about what to do with stress and handling it.
- More teachers would be open to getting to know me on a personal level.
- Giving us a growth mindset to learn and make mistakes.
- Give me back my tutorial.
- I think PALY focuses too much on the hard academics and we should encourage collaboration, artistry, and citizenship more. Without those traits we go into the adult world without the real soft skills needed.
- I spent a really long time at school feeling very unintelligent because the classes that I liked and showed merit in (English, History, etc.) weren't 'hard' classes or valued in the same way that STEM classes were valued across much of the school.
- There is a lot of resentment from the students to the administrators because they are not actually doing anything. They just want to act like they're doing something about the suicides.
- Stress is part of Palo Alto culture, and it has been ever since we were put on the map. It has led to many great success stories, but it is also important to remember the cost of human life and livelihood.