



**STRESS REPORTED BY  
MILLS HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENTS--A REVIEW OF  
CURRENT LITERATURE &  
INTERVENTIONS**

*In Support by the San Mateo County  
Behavioral Health Office of Diversity & Equity  
Chinese Health Initiative 2015*

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# Table of Contents

- 1) Current issue regarding San Mateo County youths suicide
- 2) Students reported stress
  - Denise Pope's Stanford Education Research
  - "Doing School"
- 3) Systemic Issues
- 4) Mental Health Interventions
- 5) Chinese students focused interventions

# Stress

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“a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.”



(Burns, 2006)

# Why Are We Talking About This?

In a span of one month in 2014, two students from Gunn High School located in Palo Alto, died tragically on the Caltrain track. Their deaths mark the eight deaths resulting in suicide in 2014 (Ivie, 2014).

On January 24, 2015, another Gunn HS student committed suicide also on the Caltrain track. His death marked the third suicide to occurred in less than four months (Kapp, 2015).

# Sadly, this is not a new phenomenon....

“[Thomas Ray Hoo](#), a [Lowell High School](#) junior in San Francisco, was a model student and athlete. He was captain of the football team, placed second in all-city wrestling, had good grades and lots of friends. To all at his school, he was not a likely candidate for suicide. But, below the surface, behind the shy, goofy smile and confident mien, was a nagging sense of inadequacy. He never felt big enough, fast enough, smart enough.” (Guthrie, 2002, p.1).



# Across the country...

Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C.  
Chicago's Western suburbs  
California Bay Area (Bruni, 2015).

“When everyone builds you up to be perfect, it's even harder to go to someone for help....when you're in that position at the top of your class, or the top of whatever you're doing, it becomes so much harder to ask for help and so much harder to fail, and you can feel you're worthless no matter how many people say you're perfect, how many straight A's you get” (Chen & Tan, 2014).

A study by the San Mateo Youth Commission looking at data from 2011-2014 found that 70% of youth reported that school work, projects, or finals were the primary cause of depression related feelings (County of San Mateo Adolescent Report 2014-2015).

**According to a 2013 survey by the C.D.C., 17 percent of American high school students had considered suicide in the previous year. Eight percent said they attempted it.**

# Suicide Cluster

A group of three or more suicides in close time or geographic proximity. This is quite rare-nationally, an average of 5/year.

-most common amongst adolescents, college students, prisoners, and soldiers.

-Amongst adolescents, it is believed that one teen's suicide can serve as a trigger for another vulnerable individual.

“Generally, in a teenagers model-someone is already thinking about it, but has enough of a braking mechanism. Then someone dies, the sail changes, and suddenly it's a possibility,” Dr. Gould from Columbia University Medical Center.

-This holds true across age spectrum: the day after Robin Williams's suicide last August, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline fielded the greatest number of calls in its history.

# Mills Students (Stress & Coping)

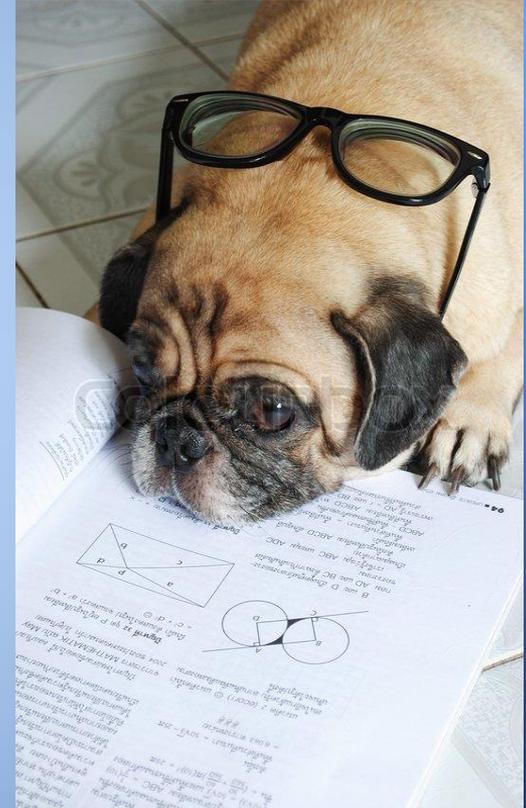
## Stressors:

- Grades
- College Applications
- Extra-curricular Activities Overload
- Advanced Placement Classes Overload
- Self Searching-Finding meanings
- Identifying & Developing Self-Identity
- Lack of Parental Understanding & Support
  - Comparison to family/friends
- Generational Misunderstandings
- Lack of Coping Skills on How to Handle Stress
- Lack of Validation (Family & Teachers)
- Lack of Empathy (Teachers)

## Coping:

- Talk to friends/family
- Sports
- Isolation
- Eating

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- 30% of the students at the meeting have a part time job.
  - 100% of the students at our meeting are involved in sports and or school clubs (e.g. Red Cross volunteering, cultural clubs, sports, theater/dance group).
  - 13% of the students said they don't have anyone that they can talk to.



# Mills High School

- Public HS in Milbrae, CA
- Been named a CA Distinguished School. Known for its Academic Excellence.
  - Advanced Placement classes
  - Extracurricular Activities
- 2014-2015: 1,214 students
  - Asian: 49.80%
  - Hispanic 17.30%
  - White 14.60%
  - Filipino 10.10%
  - Two or More Races 5.70%
  - Pacific Islander 2%
  - African American 0.30%
  - American Indian 0.20%
- 98% of its graduates in 2012 went on to college (e.g. Private universities, UCs, CSUs, and/or Community Colleges).

## CAASPP DOUBLE BLOCK BELL SCHEDULE FINAL~ Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>-Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>

Monday (1-7)	Tuesday (ODD Block)	Wednesday (EVEN Block)	Thursday (ODD Block)	Friday (EVEN Block)
Period 1.....8:00-8:51	Period 1 ..... 8:00-9:32	<b>Collaboration.... 8:10-9:20 Late Start for Students</b>	Period 1 ..... 8:00-9:32	Period 2..... 8:00-9:32
Period 2.....8:57-9:48	Brunch ..... 9:32-9:43	Period 2..... 9:30-11:02	Brunch ..... 9:32-9:43	Brunch ..... 9:32-9:43
Brunch.....9:48-9:57	KVIK .....9:49-9:52	Brunch ..... 11:02-11:13	KVIK .....9:49-9:52	KVIK .....9:49-9:52
Period 3.....10:03-10:54	Period 3 ..... 9:52-11:24	KVIK .....11:19-11:22	Period 3 ..... 9:52-11:24	Period 4..... 9:52-11:24
KVIK..... 11:00- 11:03	Lunch..... 11:24-11:54	Period 4..... 11:22-12:54	Lunch..... 11:24-11:54	Lunch.....11:24-11:54
Period 4.....11:03-11:54	Period 5..... 12:00-1:32	Lunch.....12:54-1:24	Period 5..... 12:00-1:32	Period 6.....12:00-1:32
Lunch.....11:54-12:24	Period 7..... 1:43-3:15	Period 6..... 1:30-3:02	Period 7..... 1:43-3:15	<b>Collaboration.....1:43-3:15 Early Release for Students</b>
Period 5.....12:30-1:21				
Period 6.....1:27-2:18				
Period 7.....2:24-3:15				

# Typical School Schedule from a High School Junior

- 5:45 a.m.: Wake up and head to the pool for swim team practice
- 7:30 a.m.: Out of the pool, take quick shower, and get to school in time for early bell
- 7:50 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.: School day that includes AP Calculus<sup>2</sup>, AP U.S. History, AP English, Honours Spanish, Biology, Art History, and Physical Education
- Prom planning meeting during lunch
- 3:00 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.: Service club meeting after school
- 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.: Back to the pool for more swim practice
- 7:00 p.m.: Quick dinner, and then three-four hours of homework
- 11:00 p.m. - midnight: Bedtime, depending on homework load

# “Doing School”

Denise Pope, Stanford University

“Going through the motions, slogging through the school day, turning in the work, often getting good grades, but with very little attempt to learn the material in depth or master the skills and knowledge of the subject areas. School was not about learning. It was about making the grades and getting scores, using all necessary means to achieve...” (Pope, 2010, p. 5).

“People don’t go to school to learn. They go to get good grades, which brings them to college, which brings them high-paying jobs, which brings them to happiness, so they think. But basically, grades are where it’s at” (Pope, 2001, p.2).

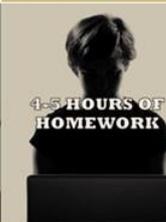
“There is no margin for error. When someone gets a C+ in Spanish they cry. I received a C+ in Spanish. My parents were screaming at me, and they said I should get a tutor. They have no idea what it is like to go to school-how much pressure it is” (Pope & Simon, 2005, p. 34).

“I sometimes have two or three days where I only get two hours of sleep per night. I see lots of my friends burned out, but I don’t have time to worry about this....Some people see health and happiness as more important than grades and college; I don’t. I feel compelled to compete because we have a really smart class, and I am competing with them to get into college” (Pope, 2001, p.34).

# INTERVENTION: *Challenge Success*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIR1y50s\\_Lk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIR1y50s_Lk)

## Who We Are



## What We Do

## Why It's Important

**Children Are Not Numbers.** At Challenge Success, we believe that our society has become too focused on grades, test scores and performance, leaving little time and energy for our kids to become resilient, successful, meaningful contributors for the 21st century.

Every day, we provide families and schools with the practical, research-based tools they need to raise healthy, motivated kids. Success, after all, is measured not at the end of the semester, but over the course of a lifetime.

### Get Your School Involved!

We team with middle and high schools from across the country to provide practical, research-based solutions to increase student engagement while reducing the undue stress and pressure so many of our students are feeling.

Click here to learn more about:

- For educators
- For students
- School conferences
- Professional development
- Parent education

### Take a Parent Education Class

We provide parents of students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade with university-based research translated into practical, everyday strategies that they can use to be better parents and raise kids who will thrive.

More on our Parent Education offerings

- For parents
- Live parent education classes
- Parent education videos
- Presentations to school and community groups

### Check Out Our Research

Challenge Success is a research-based organization. Everything we do is based on our own research findings as well as findings from other top researchers in the fields of education, psychology, and medicine.

To find out more, follow these links:

- Research
- White papers
- Do You Know
- School surveys
- Research articles
- Program Impact Study

Challenge Success can help your school, contact Margaret Dunlap at [mdunlapchallengesuccess@gmail.com](mailto:mdunlapchallengesuccess@gmail.com).

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### 2015 New Schools Participation Options and Pricing Information

#### Conference Package (\$5250)

- Admission for up to 8 team members\* to the 2015 Fall conference, including a coaching session and pre-plenary reception on Friday afternoon/evening, September 25<sup>th</sup>, and a full day of workshops, including an additional coaching session, on Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>. Breakfast, lunch, and snack are served on Saturday.
- Admission for up to 8 team members to the one day 2016 Spring follow-up conference (date to be determined). Breakfast and lunch are served during this conference.
- Designated Challenge Success coach to facilitate the action planning process for your team. Coaches meet with teams during the Fall conference, twice at the school site\*\* between October and April for up to four hours of meeting times, and during the Spring conference.
- 20% discount on parent education and faculty development presentations and workshops.
- Copy of soon to be released Challenge Success book entitled *Overloaded and Underprepared: Strategies for Stronger Schools and Healthy, Successful Kids*.

#### Comprehensive Package (\$13,000)

*All benefits of Conference package plus:*

- Additional two coaching sessions with designated Challenge Success coach to facilitate the action planning process for your team. Total support includes four coaching sessions between October and April, for up to eight hours of meeting times at the school site\*\* and coaching during the Fall and Spring conference.
- Two parent education and/or faculty development presentations or workshops.\*\*
- Implementation and feedback from the Stanford Survey of Adolescent School Experiences to serve as an initial needs assessment and benchmark of the change process.

#### Membership Package (\$750)

*For schools unable to purchase the comprehensive or conference package, we offer a membership package which includes:*

- Two 1-hour consultations with our Schools Program Director (Skype or phone call).
- Access to best practices designed to increase student engagement and well-being.
- Access to our Action Planning Guide (a guided process for making lasting changes at your school).
- 10% discount on parent education and faculty development presentations and workshops.
- Copy of soon to be released Challenge Success book entitled *Overloaded and Underprepared: Strategies for Stronger Schools and Healthy, Successful Kids*.

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\*Additional team members will be charged a per person fee if slots are available. Please contact

# Working with Chinese American Students from a Mental Health Perspective

## 1) Immigration Narratives

- a) History of Asian Americans in the United States & the Origin of the “Model Minority” Stereotype

## 2) Supportive Interventions (long term goal)

- a) Group therapy
- b) Mentoring
  - i) Adults
  - ii) Peers

# Asian Americans & the “Model Minority”

- 1850-1905: Large wave of Japanese and Chinese immigration, mainly to Hawaii and California.
  - In CA-the Gold Rush and Railroad work.

- In the 1940s and 1950s both Japanese and Chinese immigrants were subjected to intense hostility in the United States (including but limited to: barring from naturalization, occupational discrimination, and residential segregation).

- “Asian American” was an idea invented in the 1960s (civil rights movement) to bring together Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans for political purposes.
  - Later on other Asian origin groups such as Koreans, Vietnamese, Hmong and South Asians Americans were added.

- The classifying of Asian Americans as the “model minority” took place in the 1960s as the “United States’ geopolitical ambitions triggered seismic changes in popular notions of nationhood and belonging, which in turned challenged the stronghold of white supremacy. As a result...By the mid-1960s with the invention of a new stereotype of Asian Americans as the model minority-a racial group distinct from the White majority, but lauded as well assimilated, upwardly mobile, politically nonthreatening, and definitely not-Black” (Wu, 2014).

# Impact of the “model minority” stereotype

The cultural Expectation placed on Asian Americans as a group that each individual will be:

- smart (i.e., "naturally good at math, science, and technology")
- Wealthy
- hard-working, self-reliant, living "the American dream"
- docile and submissive, obedient and uncomplaining
- spiritually enlightened and never in need of assistance!

**The facts are that Asian Americans are a diverse group of individuals, with diverse experiences.** Did you know, for example that:

- Asian American college students are more likely to seek medical leave, more likely to go on academic probation, and are less likely to graduate in 4 years.
- Asian American students were more likely than White students to report difficulties with stress, sleep, and feelings of hopelessness, yet they were less likely to seek counselling.
- 33% of Asian American students drop out of high school or don't graduate on time.

# How the Model Minority Stereotype is Experienced

- Others (peers, teachers, counselors) tell you that "you must be great at math and/or science! Are you going to go to med school?"
- Teachers and classmates assume that you "study all the time" and that you're "doing just fine" without any additional help.
- Family wonders why you are choosing a major like Art or Journalism instead of medicine or engineering, "like your cousins (or brothers/sisters)"
- Peers express envy or resentment that you "probably get A's all the time," or that you surely were easily admitted any prestigious universities.
- Others seem surprised when you "stand up for yourself" or express dissatisfaction about a situation
- You feel inadequate about not "living up to" the image of (academic) excellence that others seem to expect of you

# Minority Model Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxLVKROww7s> -  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxLVKROww7s>

# Recommendations

- On campus Psychoeducation and Supportive therapy groups

Goals:

- Creating a safe space for validation of students' stressful experiences & cultivating an empathetic environment to lessen student's feelings of isolation and inadequacy.

- Developing healthy coping skills

- Creating Mentorship Program for Students

- Adult Mentoring

- Training students to become Mental Health

- Ambassador (peer mentoring).

*“We want someone to understand and accept us as fully as possible so that we can understand and accept ourselves. We want to be seen both as ordinary members of the human race and as remarkable in our distinctness.”*

Nancy McWilliams from *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: A Practitioner's Guide*