

“The Smoke Signal”

Stressed-Out Students holds four seminars

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MSJ has always been known for its students' high stress levels, but this year, a group of students, parents, and teachers hope to change that. The Stressed-Out Students (SOS) project, part of Stanford University's School of Education, is a new organization looking to “support a school environment that nurtures integrity, academic engagement, connectedness, and well-being,” according to its mission statement.

SOS will analyze the school's current condition by administering an anonymous school-wide survey in December. The survey will cover topics including students' perceived stress levels, parental pressure, cheating, curriculum, homework, and sleep schedule. The results will be compiled and evaluated by a team from Stanford.

Once problem areas are identified, SOS will propose possible solutions and work to educate students and their families on reducing stress. SOS's stress education practices may even be integrated into freshman Health courses.

Remedies being considered currently include a revised honor code to reduce the occurrence of cheating, and even a possible shift toward block scheduling.

In order to provide stress education to parents, SOS will be holding four evening seminars throughout the school year. The seminars will feature many guest speakers including UC Berkeley Admissions Officer Ken Gonsalves, College Advisor Alice Kleeman, Educational Consultant Jim Lobdell, and Stanford Professor and former MSJ teacher Dr. Denise Pope, author of “Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed-Out, Materialistic and Miseducated Students.” They will cover topics including college admissions, academic stress, the effects of stress on the mind and body, and what parents can do in order to make a difference.

Obviously, SOS's actions will not see results immediately; it will take time for the changes to take effect. Hopefully, in the long term, MSJ's student body will benefit from them.

Junior Cecilia Cheng, a member of SOS, said, “We hope to gradually bring about change ...and basically [make] the students' overall experience more enjoyable.”