

Washington Post features SOS



Written by Julia Harrell & Dale Wang

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The Washington Post ran an article on MSJ's Stressed-Out Students (SOS) program on Nov. 4. The article focused on the intense stress level that students deal with on a daily basis along with the administrators' efforts to adopt anti-stress reforms. A supplementary web cast was posted on Nov. 5 on the Washington Post website. Vice Principal Sandy Prairie participated, along with Assistant Principal Zach Larsen, MSJ parent Martha Kreeger, and Counselor Merri Blum. The three MSJ students who were initially featured in the Washington Post article were not available for the webcast.

SOS founder and Stanford Professor Denise Pope was also a part of the webcast and answered questions from her office at Stanford University. The webcast focused on the SOS program in general, though people were able to ask questions about what they read in the article and regarding MSJ. Parents from other high-performing, high-stress high schools dialed into the webcast with questions and comments on student stress levels and the increasing difficulty of college admissions.

The SOS board at MSJ, which consists of students, parents, and administrators, has not yet made any definite decisions as to what kinds of reforms the SOS program will bring to the school, but they hope that touring and researching other high schools engaged in SOS will help bring positive changes to the student body.

Since SOS's beginnings at the Stanford School of Education, it has attracted national attention. The New York Times recently published an article on the SOS project in Needham High School in Needham, Massachusetts and focused on Principal Paul Richards and his proactive efforts to minimize stress in his students with homework-free weekends, holidays, and yoga classes.

Prairie believes that while the curriculum at MSJ is important to maintain, the SOS project is also highly beneficial to students and teachers. "We don't want the quality of our program to go down," said Prairie. "But we just want to do things better, not necessarily harder or rougher for everybody."

Student, parent, and teacher members of SOS will be taking a trip to Saratoga High School to look at the reforms it has made through the SOS program.

The administration hopes to begin compiling information about MSJ students' stress levels through surveys beginning later this year.

Upcoming SOS Seminar

Date: Thursday, December 13 Time: 7:30 pm Location: C-120