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THE TRIBUNE INVESTIGATES DRUG USE AT DOUGHERTY

Dougherty's reputation takes a hit

By Irene Chang & Michael Shi
Student Life & Copy Editor
& A&E Editor

Over winter break, we journeyed with our friend Arnold* to one of the many secluded spots in San Ramon, away from the paved roads and orderly neighborhoods. A small fortress of nature protected us from the rest of civilization as we squatted in the dirt. The isolation of the grove was slightly unnerving. We watched him produce a glass contraption that vaguely resembled a vase, initiating both of us with our first close-up encounter with drugs.

Like many students at Dougherty, neither of us ever had the time or intention to try any illicit substances, and we simply observed as Arnold exhaled a stream of white smoke. Yet Arnold certainly isn't alone. A significant percentage of the student body has experimented with drugs; some students estimate that over half have tried.

When questioned, the people of DVHS were surprisingly open and honest about drug use. When promised anonymity or encouraged by familiarity with the interviewer, their answers were delivered with sincerity. This article would not exist without their participation, and it is their insights that formed the basis for this cursory look into a darker side of Dougherty.

THE DETAILS ON DRUGS

According to our research, the most common drugs among students at Dougherty are marijuana and alcohol. The vast majority of drug use appears limited to those two substances and vaping (which refers to using an electronic vaporizer device to inhale aerosol) as well. The rate of drug use varied significantly, but many of our subjects only do drugs on the weekends or a few times a month.

The most experienced drug users we encountered were a trio of juniors, who had tried ecstasy (also known as MDMA), salvia (a hallucinogen), LSD (a psychedelic drug)

and 2C-B (also psychedelic) in addition to daily usage of marijuana. They scoffed at the idea of buying the harder drugs on campus, admitting that they associated with people of college age to acquire those. They also revealed that there were upperclassmen at Dougherty who had done cocaine, although the number was quite small. For the three juniors, future plans regarding drugs included shrooms (mushrooms with psychoactive components) and cocaine.

The locations where students did drugs were much more diverse than the drugs themselves — answers ranged from a backyard to beneath a bridge. It was universally agreed upon that doing drugs with friends was much better than doing them alone. Drugs were referred to as a cultural “bonding” moment that facilitated social interaction, or a community that transcended school.

As we expected, students refused to divulge who and where they went to for drugs. The most specific answers we received were that sources could be school friends, older kids, online dealers or clubs in other cities. Many students believed that it is relatively easy to obtain drugs if one has the desire to do so. A common price point was generally defined as \$10 to \$15 for a gram of marijuana, and a similar amount for a single pill of MDMA. Standardized prices could be lowered for friends or if buying in bulk. The quality of the drugs varies among dealers, although drug users most likely know their market and community well enough to discern the good from the bad.

REASONS FOR DRUG USAGE

The reasons behind drug use were relatively tame — we encountered no disturbed youths seeking refuge from reality. The most common motive was curiosity, as many students simply wanted to try it out and decided they liked the feeling. Many continued doing it for entertainment. One senior compared his vaping to the relaxation others felt when reading a book, or the head rush gained from drinking Monster.

A teacher offered a more profound explanation. This teacher's opinion was that students were “trying to escape the present,” the same reason for drug use when this teacher attended high school. Another teacher believed that the people someone associated with were a significant factor when



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WILDCAT TRIBUNE
The dangers of drug use and smoking are apparent, but some Dougherty student still choose to partake.

starting to use drugs, and our evidence supports this idea.

Peer pressure and the urge to fit in influence every teen's life, and are only strengthened by the “community” of drug use. We even heard drugs being referred to as a “social platform.” One aforementioned junior, who said he first tried drugs in middle school, stated that he respected certain older kids and wanted to be more like them, and since they did drugs, he started too. A sophomore revealed that his cousins introduced him to drugs after seventh grade.

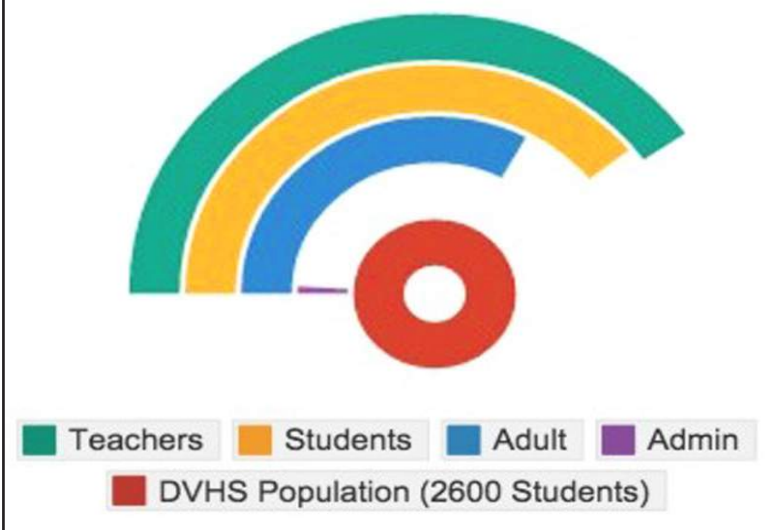
Multiple teachers were convinced that academic stress influences drug use. An administrator expressed that the need to succeed

could be harsh and overwhelming for many students, and that the self-imposed psychological pressure was unnecessary. Dougherty is certainly a good school, but our excellence comes at a cost. Whether consciously or not, maybe students use drugs to seek a way to escape the workload.

Regardless of intentions, many students are aware of the risks. A junior confessed that she wanted to try shrooms and acid, but was scared of endangering herself and possibly becoming addicted. Likewise, another student feared addiction due to rumors he heard of overdoses. One senior divulged that he used to do twice as much nicotine when vaping than most

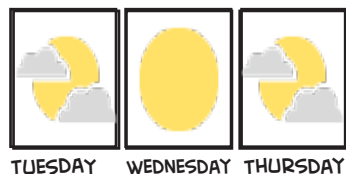
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POLL: WHAT PERCENTAGE OF DV STUDENTS DO DRUGS?



POLL COURTESY OF MIMI EVANS

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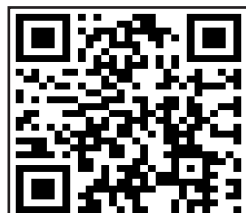
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Blank space: cheaters thrive at Dougherty

By Alicia Ho
Copy & Web Editor

Academic dishonesty has become an increasingly prevalent occurrence at Dougherty in the past few years, with 65.5 percent of surveyed DVHS students claiming that they

have cheated at least once at school.

52.6 percent said they have cheated multiple times. Even 40 percent of those who said they have never been academically dishonest report they have thought about cheating in school before.

AP Chemistry

teacher Mr. Schnell calls this issue an “epidemic” at Dougherty. He reports noticing a vast percentage gap between class score averages on every test, the later periods of the day eclipsing the earlier ones by as much as 10-12 percent.

Many students agree on the cause for these

differences in test scores. 71.4 percent of the survey respondents ascribe the rise of academically dishonest behavior to the competition and pressure characteristics of Dougherty.

Senior Jessica Chipley comments, “I think it's the competitiveness and the cut-

throat environment.” “We base our worth and how we judge other people on their scores,” another senior* agrees.

This increased emphasis on stellar academic performance seems to spread the belief that grades trump knowledge. Test days are often

fraught with anxiety and desperation, and the scrambles for test information during breaks are often attributed to the difficulty of the class.

However, Mr. Schnell believes that class difficulty as a motive for academic dishonesty “stems from the fact that

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DRUG USE

people, but recently attempted to drastically lower his usage. Overall, our research found that drug use at DVHS is mild and recreational, and we heard no tales of serious harm befalling a student.

THE SUPPLIERS

We assumed that the people who would know the web of relations between drug users at Dougherty best are the ones who distribute the material — dealers. Even though they were interviewed separately, hookah pen dealers Rick* (a senior) and Davion* (a sophomore) knew each other personally and confirmed that they knew many other drug users at this school.

Rick and Davion both source their products online. Rick's consumers are mostly freshmen. Like with many other upperclassmen interviewed, Rick believes that freshmen are mainly influenced by their peers to try drugs, and will purchase it at whatever cost.

"Freshmen want to do it ... You can jack up the price because they are so desperate to buy it, so it is a lot about peer pressure," he said.

Davion said that his customers are mainly sophomores because they know him.

"They either talk to me in person, like 'Oh I've heard you do this and this', and [I] gain their trust and make a deal with them," he added.

Opinionated statistics to how many students at Dougherty have at least tried drugs were given with barely any hesitation. Rick said 40 percent, while Davion said at least half the student population.

"You'd be surprised [at who does it]," Davion observed.

Both dealers take drugs themselves. Rick initially tried hookah pens and now vapes regularly while Davion smokes marijuana.

Of course, dealing drugs is definitely not without its risks. A suspension, confiscation of the substances and a call home are among the most basic of punishments if caught dealing at school, according to Rick. There are even harsher consequences in the long run, such as "wrecking your job record."

"And if you're 18 or over, it's prison," he added.

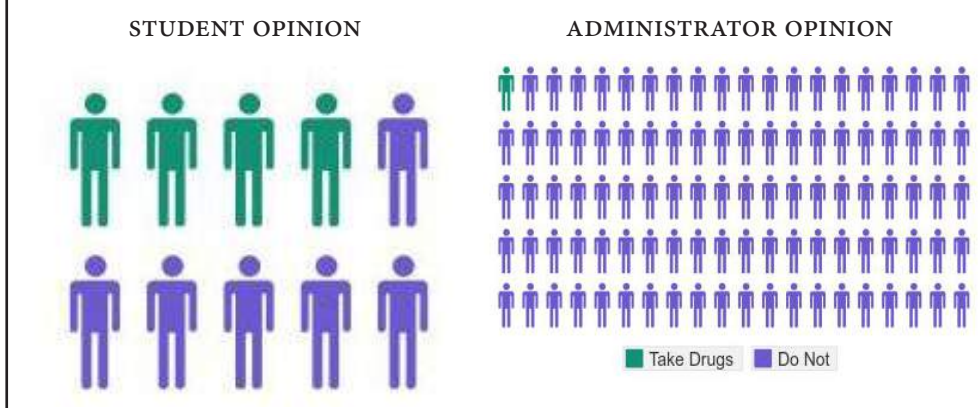
OPINIONS ON DRUG USERS

Every student interviewed was asked their estimate of how many students take drugs at

Dougherty. The most common estimate was quite high at 40-60 percent. Many of these students did not associate with drugs or drug users whatsoever.

The interesting thing was that kids who have friends who do drugs or know more than the average student about drug use reported similar percentages, if not higher.

STUDENT VS. FACULTY OPINION: HOW MANY DV STUDENTS DO DRUGS?



POLL COURTESY OF MIMI EVANS

The average consensus was 40 percent from all types of students — just under half of the student body. While this number may seem reasonable given the amount of stories and suspicions circulating around school, it must also be taken into consideration that these students may not have done the math— 40 percent of roughly 2,700 kids would mean that 1,080 students, or 2 out of every 5, take drugs regularly. The number spiked significantly higher when the question changed to the estimate of how many have at least tried drugs, or if alcohol was included as an abusive substance.

Nearly all interviewees were of sophomore class or above. Only a few freshmen were interviewed (many declined our request for comment), but those who were could not confirm if anyone in their class took drugs. Their estimates were much lower at 10-20 percent. Our survey results reveal the trend that as the grade level increases, the knowledge of drugs and drug users at the school increases as well.

Most sophomores and nearly all upperclassmen interviewed knew at least one person who openly took drugs, while most freshmen knew none. Each student's experiences with drugs ranged greatly from the next, but all had an air of disapproval and sometimes even disgust.

Landon*, a junior, tried marijuana once or twice before quitting completely. He admits that he knows people that smoke everyday; many who are what he reported as "popular" kids who normally wouldn't be expected to do so. He estimated that around 30 percent of students take drugs regularly, and out of the junior class alone, over a quarter have tried doing drugs.

"There's a lot of stoners in our school, not gonna lie; once you've done it you'll know how many people do it," he commented.

However, he regards these users with disapproval, noting that "It's their life. Like, if they want to f*** up their life, then that's up to them, but they shouldn't do it."

Alfred*, a sophomore and a close friend of a few marijuana users, gave us a differ-

ent perspective. As someone who is around a large group of students who are rumored for drug use, but has never been tempted to try anything himself, he confirmed his own feelings of disapprobation.

"Yeah I get associated with doing drugs — you thought I did!" Alfred said indignantly. "I don't like it, and I don't like anything to

do with drugs ... it kind of makes me mad that people think I do it because I hang out with them."

Like many other interviewees, he estimated that a little less than half of the kids at Dougherty take drugs, and mainly do so to fit in.

ADMIN & TEACHER VIEWPOINTS

We also spoke with several teachers and administrators on the subject of drug use at Dougherty. A few teachers we interviewed tried drugs in the past, although we did not find any current users. Administration stated that no staff members had ever been caught for drug-related offenses.

There is a teacher in possession of a vaporizer, but the teacher only uses it to alleviate her oral fixation, a psychological effect of the many years spent smoking. Although surprised by how quickly word traveled, the teacher made it clear that the teacher no longer smoked cigarettes, but utilized the vape, filled with cherry-flavored liquid, to help overcome mental habits. The teacher also told us how some students thought the vape made the teacher look cool, but the teacher emphatically declared that "it doesn't make me cool; it's a bad thing!"

Staff were confident in their ability to detect drug use. Multiple adults cited the smell as an obvious indicator; additionally, if a student acts differently than normal, it can be cause for suspicion. One staff member stated that there was often a clear connection between drugs and students coming to class late, or not at all. Yet a teacher with experience at other schools believed that drug use was much less obvious at Dougherty compared to her observations elsewhere. Due to Dougherty's privileged status, the teacher described the drugs as more of a "laboratory" type. The staff we interviewed did not frequently catch students for drug-related activities; the rate was usually less than one student per year.

In order to gain information from a more informed individual, we attempted to interview a campus monitor, but our request

for an interview was unfortunately denied. Luckily, there was an administrator willing to talk to us.

The administrator explained that instead of just focusing on the harsh discipline and nothing else, administrators also attempt to help users overcome any problems they may have. A suspension is the common sentence, but the length can be reduced if the student opts to attend a special help service.

Opinions varied on the effectiveness and fairness of the punishments. Some adults claimed that the disciplinary system was similar to when they were younger, in addition to the substances used and the reasons for doing so. One teacher desired harsher consequences, offering additional requirements such as community service or campus work.

Another administrator we spoke with was strongly against drug use at Dougherty, and urged students to "make better decisions." He stated that drug use has long-term consequences such as a negative influence on comprehension, logical thinking and decision-making, as well as creating a false sense of reality.

When asked what he would say if he could advise one thing to every student doing drugs, he stated: "It's not worth it in the long run. You have your whole life ahead of you. You don't need to do drugs to have a good time, or to deal with stress, or be cool. There are other ways [to do so]."

DOUGHERTY'S UNDERWORLD

The estimates of how widespread drug usage is at Dougherty is varied. The average estimate was that roughly half of the student body had at least tried drugs. Some students, even experienced drug users, postulated that 80 or 90 percent of Dougherty students had at least tried some type of illicit substance. These statistics are in stark contrast to the estimates of some adults and younger students, which were as low as 10 percent. One teacher guessed that just 5 percent of the student body regularly do non-alcohol drugs, but when including alcohol, the number jumped to 45 percent. Although multiple estimates from adults ranged around the 40 percent mark, and even ranged as high as 70 percent, we found an administrator's opinion particularly intriguing, who gauged that only 5 percent of students had tried drugs, and less than 1 percent were regular users.

§

Throughout the process of research and investigation, we learned quite a bit about a more clandestine aspect of student life, a realm of hidden secrets. The intricate, complex web of Dougherty's dark side is complete with dealers and users of all levels and types, based on a foundation of connections. Although most students prefer to turn away from this aspect, it's undeniable that there are a vast amount of students that use abusive substances — alcohol and marijuana amongst the most popular — and for many, their reasons include curiosity, pleasure or peer pressure. Perhaps what is most fascinating about drug use at Dougherty is that once you've stepped into the drug web, you've uncovered a whole other world that the regular student body would only have skimmed the surface of at most: Dougherty's underworld.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF IFEDUNNI SEGUN-ABUGAN
The symbol of the marijuana leaf is a popular fashion statement among students, despite being prohibited by the school dress code as "drug paraphernalia".

CHEATING

students [are not] trying to learn [the material] ... They just want to pass the test and be done with it, whereas they should try and learn it; it wouldn't be that hard without cheating."

Indeed, 75 percent of students who reported having cheated claim they did so because they didn't study for that test.

Senior Megan Li admitted to cheating multiple times, and believes it's an issue at Dougherty because "no one wants to feel dumb."

Suggesting an alternate cause of the cheating epidemic at Dougherty, one senior* believes "people not bothering to study who are too cowardly to acknowledge their error" are to blame for enabling the growth of this practice.

Survey results demonstrate that some students impute the rise of cheating to teachers as well. 66.7 percent of those surveyed at DVHS

believe the teachers' inattention to students during assessments allow cheating to flourish in school.

AP European History teacher Ms. Lazar agrees, and encourages teachers to "be really diligent about watching the students as they're taking tests" rather than "taking time to get caught up, as much as we would like to."

Regarding methods teachers can use to curb cheating, Mr. Schnell is a strong proponent of making separate tests that cover the same material but with completely different problems. He believes that creating completely distinct versions of tests is the most effective way for teachers to prevent cheating.

He concludes, "At the end of the day, people should just be honest and not cheat."

One junior*, however, believes his cheating habits are justified, arguing, "I'm ner-

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vous and don't see why not."

Senior Neal Sanghvi agrees that academic dishonesty is not an issue. He explains, "If people can cheat and get away with it, good for them. It might bite them in the rear later, but then again it might not. We've got to stop pretending that life's fair and start doing what works for us."

On the other hand, Ms. Lazar contends that "students think it's easier to cheat than it is, because I don't think they know when people get caught, because nobody brags about 'Oh, I got caught cheating,' but it happens a lot. So, I think students think they get away with cheating, but they're actually not getting away with it as often as it seems ... That's my cautionary tale to [students]."

*Some responders wished to remain anonymous.

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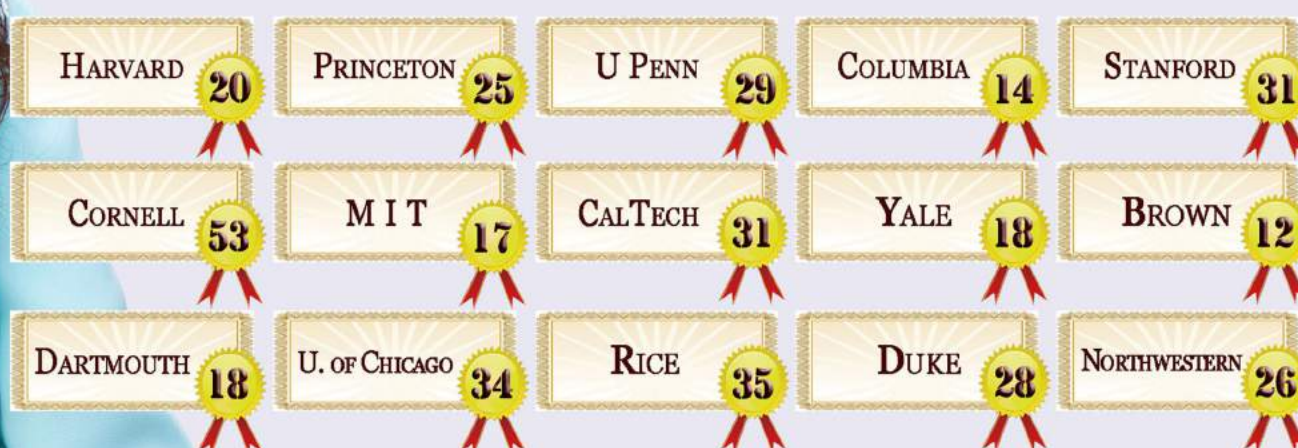
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DVHS students reach catastrophic stress levels

By Michael Tobin
Web & Advertising Editor

No one wants to feel like the overworked, underpaid worker. Yet according to the Tribune's recent survey, that is exactly how many DVHS students seem to feel — except, of course, it's worse, because we don't get paid and have to work weekends. One look around at all the baggy-eyed, yawning students tells you that lack of sleep is an epidemic here.

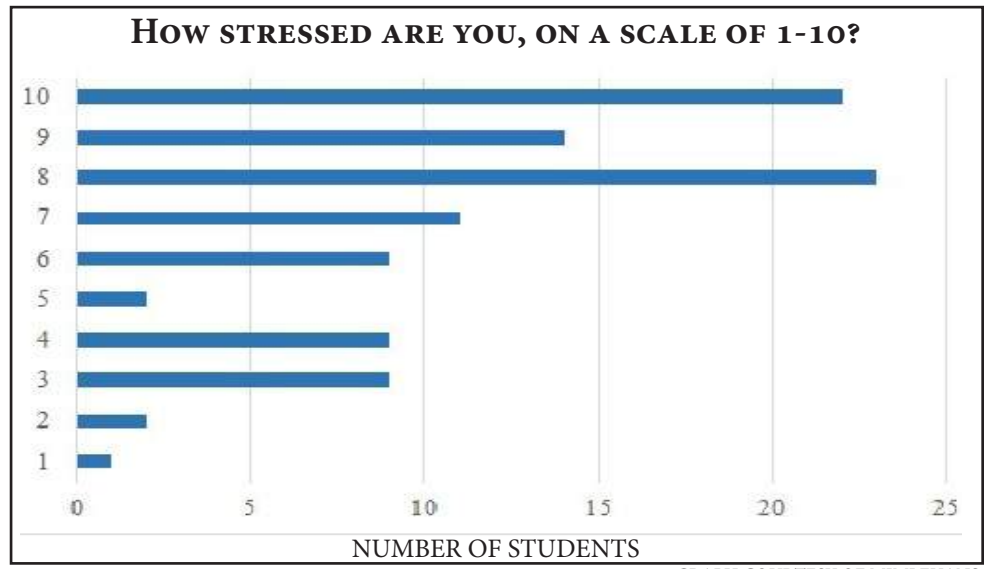
Why are we all so sleep-deprived? Well, the 105 respondents to our survey answer that too: in addition to participating in several hours of extracurricular activities each week, DVHS students report spending an average of 4.7 hours a night (Monday through Thursday) on homework. Because most colleges expect applicants to be involved in clubs and community service, extracurricular activities are essentially mandatory; dropping them to get more sleep is just not an option. Despite how zombie-like, numb and callous DVHS students may have become to this issue, it is taking a real toll on their mental and physical health.

48.6 percent of those answering the survey stated they had thoughts about suicide. They revealed that 73 percent of their stress comes from schoolwork, homework and grades. The heavy burden that school places

on students is a real problem that needs to be addressed.

The issue that we need to take on first in reducing this stress is the biggest— homework. How to address the issue of too much homework? Well, the easiest way to beat a problem is to understand it. As I see it, homework was a supplement probably first instituted in large scale during the earlier agricultural era of the United States. Back then, it was quite difficult for children to attend school regularly, what with the need for all hands on deck when farm work needed to be done. It only makes sense that additional assignments for students to do at home were created in order to provide a complete education for the children of that era. Today, the vast majority of children have no trouble attending school regularly, and yet, we have more homework than even our parents could have ever imagined. I propose fixing the problem by instituting two policies. The first policy is to decrease the level of weekly homework by 50 percent. The second policy is to make homework in a particular class optional for students maintaining an A in that class.

Decreasing the homework load by 50 percent means reducing the number of assignments each week so that students will spend, on average, only two nights on homework; the other two nights would be homework



GRAPH COURTESY OF MIMI EVANS

free. Homework-free nights would give students some breathing room, allowing them more time to study for upcoming quizzes and exams or work on assignments that are not in the nightly homework category — i.e., projects and benchmark packets.

Implicit in giving students more breathing room is another new idea: give students their finals packets at the start of the semester, so that students can see the bigger picture of where they are going in the class and can have the opportunity to start finals packets much earlier. Many a time students are given six huge finals packets one week before finals. Along with studying for finals that week before finals, most of us still have to keep up with our extracurricular commitments too. This new plan gives students the option to reduce their stress by giving them the option to start their packets sooner.

The second major policy change I proposed — to make homework in a particular class optional for students maintaining an A in that class — a bit bizarre sounding, but hear me out.

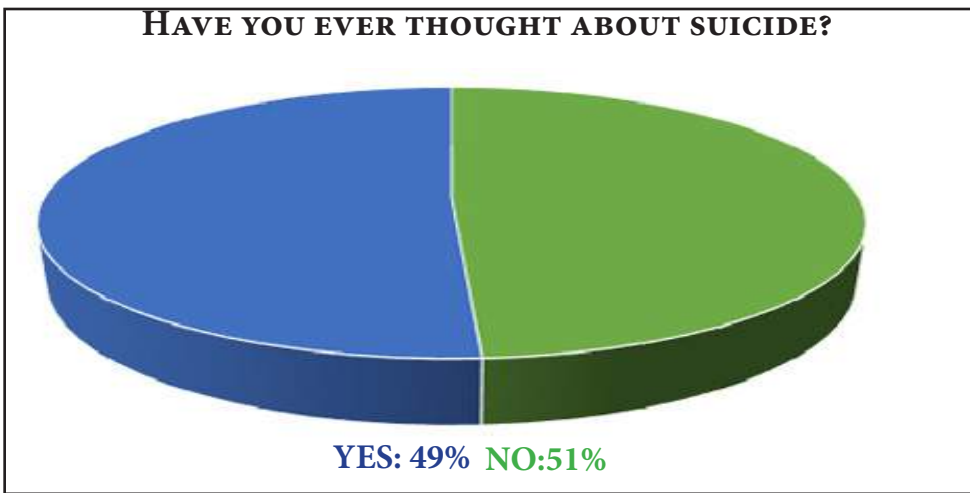
Students with A's are doing well in the class. Naturally, they need the least amount of homework. In fact, why not entrust them with the decision of how much they should

work on each subject after school? They can still hand them in, and they will be graded normally, but they do not need to hand in homework. It isn't extra credit, but it still allows a student whose grade is starting to dip to fix his grade. Finally, not only does it decrease mandatory homework loads, it forces students with low grades to do homework that will improve their grade and their understanding of the subject.

I believe the school system does value the mental health of students. Teachers are not giving homework just to torture students. However, I think there is a widespread, institutional belief that more homework means more learning. Yet, when we are so sleep-deprived that we are on the verge of falling asleep in class every day, it is clear that this massive homework load is essentially creating the opposite effect on learning.

Also, in fairness to our teachers, we have to acknowledge the strain massive homework puts on them too. How many late nights are they spending on grading so much homework?

In summary, reducing homework and making homework optional for A students is a win-win idea that the school district should seriously consider implementing.



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