

DOVER-SHERBORN HIGH SCHOOL | Public School in Dover, MA

SCHOOL NEED *“We noticed an increase in students feeling stressed out, overwhelmed and not able to cope. We had to figure out something better than Band-Aiding the problem.”* —Ellen Chagnon, Director of Guidance

PARTNERSHIP WITH CHALLENGE SUCCESS

- » Joined School Program as a New Team in 2014; Returning Team from 2015–2019
- » Administered student survey in 2014 and 2017* and parent survey in 2018

KEY CHANGES MADE

- » Revised mid-year exams to be shorter in length and spaced further apart
- » Created homework-free weekends and holidays
- » Changed homework assignments to focus on quality over quantity
- » Set goal to have everyone off campus by 5:30; limited length of sports practices accordingly
- » Built a robust and enduring parent education program
- » Launched a major “Academic Innovation” initiative to incorporate more project-based learning and alternative assessments as the next phase of Challenge Success work

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

- » Added a student wellness lens to all decision-making at the school
- » Increased student perception that the school supports them and works to reduce their stress
- » Decreased academic worry: percent of students reporting they feel “a lot” of pressure to do well in school fell from 52% to 39%
- » Improved perception of homework assignments as more purposeful, targeted, and relevant; students reporting less “busywork”

*Surveys in 2014 and 2017 were administered cross-sectionally

“We are creating a culture now where we constantly ask ourselves some important questions: Is this good for our students? Is this reasonable for our students? Will these changes allow our students to enjoy their educational experience?” —John Smith, Headmaster

“My junior year, I was taking too many AP classes and was so overwhelmed with work, plus just plain unhappy. I chose to drop one AP class and replace it with an engaging, fun class that I had always wanted to take: Marine Science. In the spirit of Challenge Success, the guidance department was extremely helpful and supportive of this decision, which made it a lot easier to take this step that would typically be against the DS norm.” —Student

“I feel a lot of parent peer pressure to overschedule my kids and they are tired. Challenge Success has made me more cognizant of saying NO to overscheduling and letting my kids have more down time.” —Parent