

*Daydream's Innovation Grant: A Year In Review*

IMSA is a residential school with a rigorous math and science curriculum. Students here are ambitious and competitive, taking a variety of advanced classes. With IMSA's many academic benefits, comes various intense pressures in its high-stress environment. As a part of this community, we have noticed our peers often negatively handle their stress by isolating themselves, staying up late, under and overconsumption, and procrastination. These habits are so normalized that as new students come into IMSA, they start to develop them too.

Moreover, these experiences can be seen in quantifiable data. IMSA's Office of Institutional Research administered the Stanford Survey of Adolescent School Experiences to students at our school. The data collected showed consistent trends of low mental health care amongst students, as 50.8% of students reported that they feel consistent pressure and a need to perform well in school. 39.9% of students stated that they always feel stressed about their schoolwork while 41% stated that they are often stressed about it.

Student issues directly impact performance in school and the ability to create strong emotional ties and support systems with others. While school performance declines, emotional wellbeing and student happiness rates decline as well. This behavior is in line with many students' self-placed pressure to excel in academics. When these decrease, the ability to create strong social bonds and support systems in school communities drop dramatically as well. Having fewer support systems means students trap themselves in a cycle of misery, and worsening conditions for their life. Improper stress management is a major issue, and seeing its impact on our classmates, made us realize the importance of improving how our community and similar communities handle stress.

Our solution to this is Daydream, a mental health app targeted at high-stress, teenage students who want to improve their mental health habits. We intend to approach the mental health problems within various academic communities by creating features of Daydream that address these concerns, starting with our school. After Daydream is established at IMSA we will expand our target market to other schools. The app's focus is to create a low-stress environment where students have a safe, anonymous space to rant about their personal burdens, while learning better stress management techniques.

The features of Daydream will accomplish this through a variety of methods that improve mental health in different ways. Through them we aim to reduce pre-established negative coping mechanisms by teaching healthy short and long-term strategies. This will combat the growing numbers of student-targeted mental health problems and prepare them for real-life scenarios. Notable features include games & goals, chat communities, resource connections, and events. The Games & Goals feature targets specific goals based on what the user chooses to focus on when signing up for their account. These games help students manage their stress and better prioritize their health in a fun and interactive fashion. Next, the chat communities are anonymous discussion boards centered around various topics, from sports to open ranting. This is highly beneficial because it provides users both a platform for expressing themselves and a community based on shared interests, backgrounds, and needs. Additionally, its anonymity helps to alleviate concerns of being judged or singled out. Moving on, the resource and connections feature increase access to counselors and professionals, by being a cover page that links to the virtual sign-up page for the school counselors of each Daydream-sanctioned school. This feature would be changed to support each school's counseling team. Some students might feel intimidated talking to other users on the chat community, while others might feel intimidated talking to a

counselor, so having both the chat communities and the resource connection problem shoot this concern. Finally, the events feature notifies users of upcoming daydream events such as workshops and collaborations with other groups.

We are confident in the value of Daydreams features, as they are directly based off feedback we received from a survey we sent out to IMSA students. This survey listed all of Daydream's main features at the time, asking students which they found to be the most essential. 100% of survey participants indicated that the chat community feature was most important to them, in order to communicate their burdens to others and have a strong sense of community on the app. 63% of students indicated the need for personalized help, and 45.5% indicated the need for one-on-ones with counselors and mentors. In a short response, one student stated, "...I love the concept of the app, and I think you have already addressed a lot of the concerns attached to a mental health app, such as bullying and privacy. I would love to be involved in any way." Since this feedback came directly from our target audience, incorporating it into our app helps us ensure Daydream will be useful and have high engagement.

Another way we plan to increase engagement is through reward systems and our company branding. Students would receive prizes on school sites (trinkets, fidget toys, sensory items, stress balls) for going on Daydream and interacting a specified amount of times. This would motivate students to continue using Daydream in hopes of receiving these awards. Additionally, since these awards would contain the Daydream logo, they would increase brand identity. Users would associate these rewards with Daydream and develop positive connotations towards the app. Daydream would also have merchandise which would aid both its branding and revenue.

The positive connotations towards Daydream would help combat the stigmatization of mental health, making it less intimidating for students to receive help with mental health issues. Furthermore, because Daydream is easily accessible, anonymous, and engaging, it will normalize improving mental health. School should be a place where students thrive, but instead is a stressful, [anxiety inducing] environment. By promoting better stress management through Daydream, we can change this, allowing students like us to be healthier and happier.

Now that Daydream has made significant progress in both our app and merchandise, we are preparing to launch this upcoming school year. We intend to announce this with a Daydream launch party consisting of different stations including games, activities to improve mental health, anonymous confessions, prizes, food, and a Daydream racer tournament. To further promote our product we also will have a Daydream carnival later on. This will have carnival rides, and lots of other fun activities. We will advertise these on social media, and we will also use social media to market our product in general.

Daydream will use platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Webtoons to reach our primary market of students, and Facebook to reach our secondary market of parents. We will have a huge social media marketing presence on apps most used by our target market, including tiktok, youtube, and Instagram. On these platforms, we would post a mix of informative mental health graphics, interactive posts, and promotional comics. The individuals that choose to use our product will be people interested in improving their mental health, therefore posts related to mental health will draw them towards our app.

This past year, we've also worked closely with IMSA student web designers to bring the Daydream web application to life. The app is available for installation and complete with spaces for signing up, chatting with other members, and a variety of pages. Currently, we're working on

continuing to finalize the app and opening its features for anyone to use. Additionally, we've designed a line of merchandise dedicated to accompany the Daydream app in helping relieve students' stress. We have currently designed slug fidget toys, representing Daydream's mascot and goal of stress relief. We also intend to release t-shirts and stickers that will help promote the Daydream community and indicate safe spaces for students.

Mentors that we have worked with this year besides our primary contacts are Steve Goldblatt and Takeisha Rheams include Tatum Glas, Grant Bell, Tanya Crum, and various Student Council representatives. We plan to expand our connections in the future to guarantee the success and longevity of Daydream even after the original co-founders graduate. Currently, we plan to use a second Innovation Grant to expand our slug merchandise line that helps students focus in the classroom. Overall, the first year of Daydream under IMSA-sanctioned grants has been a fruitful one, with tremendous growth that we hope to continue going into the next school year and beyond with IMSA's resources and help.

- Janelle Le Roy '23, Julia Tran '23, Ela Gadi '23, and Michelle Li '23