

Year of Inquiry into Student Mental Health

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- 652 residential students
- Grades 10-12

Student Support

- 2 School Counselors (LCPCs)
- 4 College & Academic Counselors and 2 Learning Strategies Team Members

Student Population of Academy, 2018-2019

Percentage of students identifying as:

- 41.7 Asian
- 35.4 White
- 8.9 Hispanic or Latino
- 8.1 Black
- 5.9 Two of More Races, Non-Hispanic or -Latino

Male = 50%

Female = 50%

20%

of students' time is spent on independent research and internships.

32.1

is the mean composite ACT score of the IMSA Class of 2017.

43,333

hours of community service are performed by IMSA students each year.

16 of 35

required classes for graduation are in math and science. (Each class is .5 credit.)

Year of Inquiry Objectives

- To engage in an in-depth examination of a current challenge that significantly influences IMSA's work and mission
- To identify both the scope of and potential solutions to the challenge
- Topic: **Student mental health and well-being**

Year of Inquiry Kick Off

- Introduced at Community Day, June 2018
- Town hall style meetings, September 2018
 - Year of Inquiry model overview
 - Introduce student mental health focus
 - Review Challenge Success data
- Listening interviews, September & October 2018

Listening Interviews

- Hosted 6 listening interviews:
 - General sessions and targeted groups
 - Identified themes to develop research question(s)
 - Recruited Year of Inquiry team members
- Questions:
 - How would you describe student mental health at IMSA?
 - What factors influence student mental health?
 - What does IMSA do best regarding student mental health?
What can IMSA do better to support student mental health?

Year of Inquiry Process

- Mid/Late October 2018
 - Selected research question(s)
 - Developed sub-committees to collect/analyze data
- November 2018-March 2019
 - Collected and analyzed data
- April 2019
 - Presented findings to Year of Inquiry team
 - Identified potential pilot projects
- May 2019
 - Year of Inquiry Town Hall meeting

Year of Inquiry Research Question & Sub-Questions

- What are the primary factors that influence students' stress and anxiety levels at IMSA?
 - Which factors lead to increased stress and anxiety levels?
 - Which factors help to decrease stress and anxiety levels?

Year of Inquiry Team Working Groups

1. Literature Review – Identified findings from previous research related to student stress and anxiety
2. Data Analysis – Analyzed data from the Stanford Survey of Adolescent School Experiences (a.k.a. the Challenge Success Survey)
3. Focus Groups - Conducted focus groups of current IMSA students related to student stress and anxiety

Literature Review

Teens experience high levels of stress, especially related to academics

- Students experience high levels of chronic stress, particularly in relation to academic performance and the college admissions process (Leonard et al., 2015).
- Teens report unhealthy stress levels; 83% indicate that school is a somewhat or significant source of stress (American Psychological Association, 2009).
- Students report feeling the most stressed by school, money, relationships, and parents (Hermann, 2008).
 - “Appreciating what teens reported regarding the stress in their lives leads to numerous measures that can be taken to aid them in dealing with those stressors.”

Many teens are not getting enough sleep, which can lead to a variety of problems

- Adolescents should sleep a minimum of nine hours; many are not getting enough sleep (Kelley et al., 2015).
- Not getting enough sleep is an important health risk among adolescents (Godsell & White, 2019).
 - Insufficient sleep is related to a variety of problems (i.e., headaches, depression, and behavioral and emotional problems).
- Adolescents who do not get sufficient restorative sleep have “the highest levels of internalizing symptoms and aggressive and rule-breaking behavior” (El-Sheikh et al., 2018).
- Peers can have both a negative and a positive effect on sleep behavior (Godsell & White, 2019).

Data Analysis

Challenge Success Survey

- Survey of High School Experience developed by Stanford in 2009
 - Academic engagement, homework, extracurricular activities, academic integrity, student support, student physical and mental well-being, parental expectations
- Administered at 10 Check in February of 2018 and March of 2019
- Response rate better in 2018 than in 2019
 - 2018: 550 of 637 Students – 86.3%
 - 2019: 495 of 639 Students – 77.5%

Focus Groups

Focus Group Research Process

- Five focus groups conducted in February
 - 50 students – 26 female/24 male
 - Participation voluntary
- Focus group questions
 - What causes IMSA students stress?
 - What are the primary ways IMSA student deal with stress?
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - What do you think IMSA can do to decrease stress levels?

Focus Group Prevalent Theme: Lack of Sleep

- Student feedback suggests a toxic environment for managing sleep
 - “Badge of honor to pull an all-nighter”
 - “Sleep is temporary, GPA is forever.”
 - IMSA stands for “Illinois Malnutrition and Sleep-Deprivation Asylum”

Focus Group Prevalent Theme: Work-Life Balance

- Overlapping of assessments and major assignments
 - Everything due on the same day
- Lack of communication among teachers
- Homework over extended weekends negatively impacts time with family/friends, ability to “recharge”

Focus Group Prevalent Theme: Time Management

- Over commitment to extra-curricular activities (i.e. sports, clubs, co-curriculars, cultural shows)
 - “What are you in?”
 - Need large number of activities for college applications (peer pressure)
- Students have difficulty planning long-term projects (or don’t know how to)
- Age appropriate social life can be difficult to balance with intense academic curriculum

Year of Inquiry Team

- 2018-2019: Year of Inquiry
 - 10 students
 - 5 staff members
 - 2 faculty members
 - IMSA President
- 2019-2020: Pilot Phase
 - Increased involvement from the Principal's Office
 - More parent and faculty involvement
 - Fewer students

Year of Inquiry Recommendations

Year of Inquiry Recommendations

1. Implement an Academy Major Assessments Master Calendar
2. No homework assigned over Extended Weekends and no major assessments on the first day of class following Extended Weekends
3. Increase focus on sleep education and incentivize positive sleep behaviors

Year 2: The Pilot Phase

NO HOMEWORK DURING EXTENDED BREAK & SPRING BREAK POLICY

- No assignments due over an Extended Break or Spring Break
- No assignments due or assessments given on the day classes convene from an Extended Break or Spring Break

MAJOR ASSESSMENTS CALENDAR PILOT FOR SELECTED JUNIOR CLASSES

- Major assessments for selected junior classes
- Students who have 3+ major in-class assessments on the same day may rearrange one of the assessments
- After 9 weeks, the Curriculum and Assessment Leaders (CALs) to solicit feedback on pilot and make changes as appropriate

Year 2: The Pilot Phase

SLEEP EDUCATION & INCENTIVES PILOTS

- Building Capacity & Buy In
- Sub-Committees:
 - Education Programs
 - Incentives
 - Policy & Protocols
 - Communication & Marketing

What if you could...

F E E L H A P P I E R

lower your risk of heart attacks,
strokes and diabetes

**LOOK MORE
ATTRACTIVE**

LIVE LONGER

be less depressed

stay slim and lower food cravings

*be protected
from cancer
and dementia*

**BE MORE
CREATIVE**

ward off colds and the flu

**BE LESS
ANXIOUS**

*enhance
your
memory*

This amazing breakthrough is called SLEEP!

Evidence supporting the proven benefits of a full night of sleep have been documented in more than 17,000 well-scrutinized and scientific reports to date. Emerging from this research is an unequivocal message: sleep is the single most effective thing we can do to reset our brain and body health each day. According to UC Berkeley professor and author of “Why We Sleep” Matthew Walker:

Based on epidemiological studies of average sleep time, millions of individuals unwittingly spend years of their life in a sub-optimal state of psychological and physiological functioning, never maximizing their potential of mind or body due to their blind persistence in sleeping to little.

Please make sure to talk to your student about their sleeping habits!

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Year of Inquiry

Lessons Learned

- Focus on engaging topic
- Communication is key
- Identify “champions” of the work
 - Motivated students and engaged staff members
 - Balancing the voices of all stakeholder groups
- Keep the work moving
- Challenges: Scheduling & Prioritization
 - Difficult to find time to meet that works for everyone, including faculty members
 - Many important areas of focus across the Academy

Questions

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