

Solutions for stressed-out high school students

By Nikhil Goyal, Wall Street Journal

Last year, at the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District in central New Jersey, Superintendent David Aderhold decided that students had had enough. District staff had recommended mental-health assessments for more than 120 middle- and high-school students for depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts—a pronounced increase from the previous year.

In a letter to parents last fall, he wrote, “I cannot help but think that we may be failing [our students] by reinforcing an educational system that perpetuates grades at the expense of deep and meaningful learning.”

Aderhold isn’t alone in questioning the high-pressure environment at many schools. With growing evidence that students are suffering from the intense competition for college admission, schools around the country are rethinking everything from tests to classes to start times.

Aderhold, whose district near Princeton University includes 9,800 students, has enacted reforms. He abolished midterms and final exams and instituted a no-homework policy during breaks and some weekends. It hasn’t all gone smoothly. Some parents have complained, worried that the changes will leave their children unprepared for elite colleges.

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