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Highlights of DS Challenge Success Activity

DS Attends the Challenge Success Fall Conference in Palo Alto

On September 30th - October 1st, eight representatives from Dover-Sherborn traveled to Stanford University for the 2016 Challenge Success Fall Conference. This is the second team that DS has sent to the annual conference (the first group attended in the fall of 2014), and this time proved to be extra fulfilling. Hannah Thompson, DS junior, was asked to represent the student voice at the Opening Night presentation and spoke in front of a crowd of 1,400 attendees. This year's theme was entitled **Media Rules: Healthy Connections in the Digital Age** which coincides with one of our current DS Challenge Success priorities: assessing the impact of social media and technology on our students.



View Hannah's speech at 55:14

The entire Stanford Keynote Presentation can be viewed by clicking on the red box below:



6:00 - Introduction of program by Co-Founders Dr. Denise Pope and Dr. Madeline Levine
19:00 - Keynote address by Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair
55:14 - Hannah Thompson, Student Speaker
1:02:02 - Student vignettes and panel discussion with Hannah, Denise, Madeline and Catherine

Reflections on the 2016 Stanford Challenge Success Conference

Barbara Brown, Principal, Pine Hill School

The Challenge Success Conference was personally and professionally uplifting! Meeting Madeline Levine and Denise Pope in person and hearing them, and many others, expand upon the research and practices that contribute to student well-being and engaged learning provided our DS team with rich ideas and reflection. Having the opportunity to travel, learn, talk, and reflect as a DS team made the experience

super meaningful and impactful. The varied representation of the lens of parents, students, teachers, and administrators was perspective-building and afforded stimulating dialogue - Our team was buzzing with ideas!

The keynote speaker highlighted the advantages and challenges of raising children in the digital age and the dilemma of balancing unprecedented access to technology with the psychological dependence we are prone to develop to our devices, which distract us from being present with our children and them from us. I also attended breakout sessions that focused on innovative approaches to improving homework policies, creative applications for project-based learning, and fostering the growth mindset. I especially appreciated hearing from high school and college-aged students regarding their experiences throughout the conference.

I look forward to working in collaboration with the DS Challenge Success Team and community to foster and enhance healthy learning experiences for all of our students.

Allison Collins, Mathematics Department, Dover-Sherborn High School

Attending the conference in California was a fantastic experience and the experience opened my eyes to new and innovative ways to reach the students I teach. I fully believe that we as teachers have as much to learn from our students as they have to learn from us, and having this opportunity to talk in a very personal setting with students, parents, administrators and fellow teachers was extraordinary. It gave me perspective about how each one of us views education and reaffirmed that we have a common goal of educating our youth and teaching them to be strong, resilient adults. The most powerful part of the conference for me was watching Hannah Thompson, a student from DS, speak to a huge crowd of strangers. She has incredible courage and watching her get up and speak from her heart was inspirational. We are so lucky that she is a part of our community, and her words helped me to see the student side of what Challenge Success can mean to our school.

Two of the discussion sessions I attended in California inspired me to try some new things within my classroom this year. One is a focus on mindfulness with my students, with the goal of helping them to remain calm under pressure. I am finding more and more that anxiety is playing a part in how my students react to stressful situations, so I am trying to impart a feeling of calm and the attitude that everyone can perform well when given the right perspective. The other is that I am trying some new ways to assign and assess homework, including providing more choice than I have in the past. By providing more flexibility, I am hoping my students will see the usefulness of homework and thereby gain more from doing my assignments.

Ultimately I think that going to the Challenge Success conference was a wonderful experience. I am excited to be on the Challenge Success team and I am looking forward to what we can accomplish with the rest of our faculty, students and parents.

Laura Dayal, Principal, Chickering School

One of the most beneficial aspects of the Challenge Success program is its emphasis on helping different segments of a community understand one another. Parents need to understand the social and academic pressures their children are under in a 24/7 constantly-connected world; educators need to understand the pressures parents are under to "do the right thing" in the eyes of the community and set their children up for "success,"; and children need to understand the many different routes to a fulfilling and happy life, some of which are nontraditional and may feel risky compared to the known, safe route provided by many high-performing districts.

In listening to Hannah Thompson speak as part of the keynote address at the Challenge Success Stanford conference, I realized that one of the best things we can do for our children is to help them be reflective and feel empowered. Hannah shared her decision to close her account on the social media site Snapchat the day before school started in order to manage the social scene. She saw the way this tool impacted her life, reflected on it, and decided that even though most other kids were part of this digital space, she was going to disconnect. Had she not reflected on the impact of this social site, or felt empowered to turn it off, this would have been one more element of a complex world she had to maneuver.

At a time when we can see so much of what "everyone does" and feel the pressure to have and pursue it all, it becomes increasingly important to reflect and make the right choices for ourselves for a healthy and happy lifestyle. I look forward to better understanding the impact of today's society on our children, and creating a new definition of success in Dover-Sherborn built on the power of our community to reflect and make good choices that will have a positive, lasting impact on our children.

Becky Gladstone, Dover-Sherborn High School Parent '13, '15, '19

Be Calm. Be Approachable. Be Fully Present. Be Informed. These are a few of the highlights I wrote down during the Conference's keynote address "Healthy Connections in the Digital Age", and I believe they can be useful reminders for many K-12 parents leading over-scheduled and media-ruled lives.

The workshop I attended on Parent Education confirmed for me the value of bringing passionate speakers, interesting films and expert panelists to Dover-Sherborn - and how vital it is to have parents, students and teachers come together to engage in dialogue.

Hannah proved to us all how imperative the Student Voice can be in guiding our efforts to nourish the well-balanced child/young adult. Our kids need to be heard, respected and valued by parents and teachers. We are fortunate enough to be members of this supportive and nurturing DS community - and attending this conference with dedicated teachers and administrators reinforced for me how extremely engaged they all are when it comes to helping our kids be the very best they can possibly be.

Brian Meringer, Assistant Headmaster, Dover-Sherborn Middle School

I left the Challenge Success Fall Conference with two major takeaways. First, if Challenge Success is going to become part of the culture of the Dover-Sherborn School System, teachers and parents must collaborate with their students/children. Friday night's opening session addressed the impact that technology is having on adolescents, and then provided advice on how to help students lessen their dependence on technology. Although the keynote speaker's lecture was thought-provoking and insightful, it was not as powerful for me as the speech by Dover Sherborn High School student, Hannah Thompson. She delivered a short talk which detailed her experience in the digital age. The speech reminded me that many well-intentioned adults often try to fix problems for students without asking them for their opinions. Secondly, as a community, we need to commit ourselves to supporting our children. Challenge Success is not simply about giving less homework or adopting a later start time. It is supporting the social-emotional needs of our children so they can develop into intelligent, resilient, healthy and happy young adults.

Cathy Simino, Fine Arts Department, Dover-Sherborn Middle School

Attending the 2106 Challenge Success annual conference allowed me to reflect on many of the realities that our children are faced with as they grow up in the 21st century. Traveling to Stanford University temporarily removed me from the hectic routine of my day to day activities. This allowed me to take pause and brainstorm solutions on how to help my students, my own children, and myself navigate the increased demands and pressures of daily life. One of the most interesting and thought-provoking workshops I attended was "The Science of Happiness." During the workshop our presenter focused on what defines success and ways to help achieve personal happiness in life. The workshop challenged the traditional ideas surrounding success (wealth, fame, status) and proposed that finding one's purpose and passion is the true key to happiness and success. As educators and parents we must help students recognize their individual purpose and guide them on a path to help them become well-balanced, happy, productive members of society. We must recognize that all students are different and that challenging the traditional definition of success is an integral part in helping students achieve.

Hannah Thompson, Junior, Dover-Sherborn High School

My experience in California can't be described as anything short of extraordinary. From the people I met, to the ideas that were shared, it was a weekend filled with unforgettable experiences. My weekend began with the presentation of my speech and sitting as a panel with Challenge Success Co-founders Denise Pope and Madeline Levine, and the other keynote speaker, Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair. The purpose of the panel was to reflect and discuss numerous short skits that were presented to us and the audience regarding the theme of the night "Media Rules." This title was a play on words in the sense that media rules because it rocks and is super helpful, media rules because there are also lots of rules that we need to follow when using the media, and finally media rules because the media rules our lives and takes control of us.

All day on Saturday our team was split up, and we each took part in three different workshops focusing on various aspects of the Challenge Success program. I took part in the "Running Effective Student Clubs" roundtable, the "Speak Up: Using Student Voice for Healthier Communication" roundtable, and the "Well-Balanced Student" presentation. From these workshops, I was able to take different skills and insights and learn to adapt them to our community at Dover-Sherborn. One idea in particular was casual dialogue between parents, teachers, and students. In the "Speak Up: Using Student Voice for Healthier Communication" roundtable, students performed improv skits for the group. The group of people in the workshop then split up into pairs to discuss what they noticed from the skit, how it relates to their school/situation, and to infer what the same scenario would look like after a period of time. The students then fast forwarded to the same scenario such and such weeks later and acted out how it had changed. It was very interesting to see how each situation escalated and how the emotions (of all parties) changed as time passed. One of the skits portrayed two students, presumably friends, and one of the students was constantly asking the other for answers to the homework. When we split up, I spoke with a man who was the head of a private school in California. We discussed the different pressures, or lack of pressures, placed on the students to make them feel that it was ok to pressure another student for the homework answers.

When the Dover-Sherborn Challenge Success team debriefed this workshop, we all agreed that we loved the open dialogue aspect of the workshop. We feel that if we provide a safe environment for discussion, we can excite and inform more people about the Challenge Success mission.



The 2016 Stanford Conference DS Team feeling inspired at the end of the weekend

Upcoming Events at DS

Teacher/Parent Forums

Back by popular demand, the Teacher/Parent Forums are being offered again this year for Middle School and High School parents. The first of these will be held the **evenings of Tuesday, November 15th (High School) and Wednesday, November 16th (Middle School)**. As in prior years, the themes of these discussions are closely related to Challenge Success.

High School Fall Teacher/Parent Forum:

Our Fall Forum, "***Achieving Balance: When to Push Them Harder, When to Pull Them Back,***" will be held on Tuesday, November 15th, 2016 from 7:00-9pm. This forum will be held at the home of Michele Mandel, 4 Southfield Drive in Dover. Light refreshments will be served. Please **register via SignUp Genius** for this event by clicking [here](#).

Middle School Fall Teacher/Parent Forum:

Our Fall Forum, "***Achieving Balance: Learning to Succeed Through Failure***" will be held on Wednesday, November 16th, 2016 from 7:00-9pm. This forum will be held at the home of Katie Sullivan, 9 Walpole Street in Dover. Light refreshments will be served. Please **register via SignUp Genius** for this event by clicking [here](#).

Family Reconnection Weekend

Dover-Sherborn High School will be once again implementing our family reconnection practice over the Thanksgiving break. As a result of our work with Challenge Success, we are trying to reduce unnecessary stress on our students and will once again be implementing a no-homework period from Wednesday, November 23rd to Monday, November 28th. All teachers have been instructed not to assign any reading, assignments or studying for assessments during this time. No assessments will be assigned for the Tuesday or Wednesday we return as well. There is no school on Monday November 28th, as teachers have a Professional Development Day.

Film Screening: Screenagers

Wednesday Evening, November 30th, 7pm at Sherborn Community Center



One of our Challenge Success priority issues for this year is the impact of social media and technology on our students. This documentary film "reveals how tech time impacts kids' development and offers solutions on how adults can empower kids to best navigate the digital world and find balance." Don't miss out on seeing this screening. Please **REGISTER IN ADVANCE** by clicking [here](#). There is no charge to attend.

Dr. Robert Brooks, Author of Raising Resilient Children, to Speak at DS Thursday Evening, January 26th at Mudge Auditorium, DSHS

How do everyday challenges become formative assets for our kids? What experiences and factors help keep our kids healthy - even in the midst of change? How can we, as adults, foster resilience? Dr. Robert Brooks offers practical tips for parents of children in grades K-12 in this must-see Parent Education program. A faculty member of Harvard Medical School, Dr. Brooks is renowned for the warmth and humor he uses to bring his insights and anecdotes to life. Click [here](#) for Dr. Brooks' website for more information on his work.



Good Reads on Screen Time

[*In 'Screenagers', What To Do About Too Much Screen Time*](#) by Jennifer Jolly, The New York Times, 3/15/2016

[*How To Deal With Digital Distractions*](#) by Quentin Hardy, The New York Times, 11/1/2016.

[*Kids who spend more time on screens are less likely to take initiative*](#) by Carly Sitrin, The Boston Globe, 10/26/2016

[*What Keeps Kids Up At Night? Cellphones and Tablets*](#) by Nicholas Bakalar, The New York Times, 10/31/2016

Info and Tips from Challenge Success National: Favorite Take-Aways from the Conference's Opening Night Presentation on Media:

Living in the Digital Age

1. In the US, the average age that kids get their first smartphone is 10 years old.
2. The manner in which teenagers use technology is generally positive, but the amount of time spent using technology is concerning. Middle schoolers are on devices for non-academic reasons from 2-5 hours per day. High schoolers are on screens for non-academic reasons for an average of 9 hours per day; this is more hours per day than they sleep!
3. Never before has it been possible to connect with friends and family 24/7. Technology can strengthen our relationships, but paradoxically, it can also strain them.
4. With unlimited access to technology, we have lost the boundaries between home and school, and home and work.
5. Kids have unprecedented access to the adult world via the internet. There is a premature loss of innocence that is occurring with widespread connectivity.
6. TV watching is passive; phones are stimulating. Human brains crave the stimulant.
7. A generation ago, kids would come home in the afternoon and have a break from the social drama at school. Today's kids don't have that luxury. Often, they return home and immediately log in to technology where the social pressures continue to play out.
8. Texting eliminates two of the most essential tools for healthy relationships - tone of voice and the opportunity to see the impact of your words on the recipient.
9. Kids experience FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) if they do not check social media while studying.
10. Every time a student takes a "break" from studying to respond to a text, he/she loses the previous 9 minutes of what has been learned. These quick "breaks" are counterproductive to the learning process.

Tips to Manage Media

1. Restrict the use of devices in the car. Car rides offer a great opportunity for conversation with our children. When parents talk on the phone while driving with kids, we inadvertently tell them that a conversation with the person on the other end of the phone is more important than an in-person discussion with them.
2. Prohibit devices at the dinner table; this is sacred family time which should be preserved.
3. Talk with your children about appropriate online conduct. Many adults are naive about their children's exposure to harmful online behavior. Even if your own children's usage is benign, it's likely that they have observed poor behavior by others.
4. Don't text your kids during the day at school; it's distracting. It makes children anxious when parents innocently text, "How'd you do on the test, honey?" This takes away their independence and the parent-child separation they deserve during school time.
5. Avoid reaching for your phone first thing in the morning. What you see in your inbox instantly frames your day and doesn't allow you the opportunity to create your own agenda - it immediately places you in a reactive mode.
6. Have your kids disengage from technology at least 30 minutes, preferably an hour, before bed. The blue light that devices emit stimulates the retina and decreases the brain's production of melatonin, which makes falling asleep more difficult.
7. Set a time in the evening by which all devices are out of the bedroom. Not only will your teenagers get more sleep, but this "curfew" will help support time management skills.
8. Teenagers (and adults) should not use their phones as alarm clocks. If a phone is by their bedside, they will be tempted to respond to texts and social media, which will delay or interrupt sleep.
9. Through middle school, look through your children's texts and let them know you're doing it. Don't view this as policing, but rather trying to give them perspective that their online activity is never truly private.

Mission of Challenge Success

In the fall of 2014, the Dover-Sherborn Regional Schools officially launched the Challenge Success Initiative for grades K-12. This innovative program based out of Stanford University works with schools and families to increase student health, well-being, and engagement. Specifically, Challenge Success aims to reduce unhealthy pressures on youth and to champion a broader definition of "success" in our schools and communities. The program accomplishes this by offering proven strategies for making effective change, drawing from the research data as well as best practices from other schools. Generously funded for the past three years through a grant from the Dover-Sherborn Education Foundation (DSEF) and a private donation, Dover-Sherborn was fortunate to be one of ten new schools joining Challenge Success in 2014 (and the only one on the East Coast) and is now in its third year of implementation with a focus on the following priorities:



1. *To address the root causes of student stress/anxiety including academic pressures and competing demands on student time.*
2. *To redefine "success" in the school community by shifting the culture away from competition and performance pressure towards collaboration and valuing of individual strengths/gifts.*
3. *To empower students by building resilience and coping skills.*

The Challenge Success Team

Barbara Brown, Principal, Pine Hill
Ellen Chagnon, Director of Guidance 6-12
Allison Collins, Math Department, DSHS
Laura Dayal, Principal, Chickering
Jill Fedor, School Nurse, Pine Hill
Becky Gladstone, Parent, DSHS
Pam Kading Webb, Parent, DSHS
Scott Kellett, Headmaster, DSMS

Heidi Loando, Adjustment Counselor 6-12
Brian Meringer, Assistant Headmaster, DSMS
Brendan O'Hagan, History Department DSHS
Elizabeth Owen, Grade 12 Student, DSHS
Cynthia Shapiro, Guidance Counselor, Chickering
Cathy Simino, Fine Arts Department, DSMS
John Smith, Headmaster, DSHS
Hannah Thompson, Grade 11 Student, DSHS
Adam Wiskofske, Science Department, DSMS

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