

# Insanity laughs, under pressure we're cracking

by Leah Pearlman

As students know, this is not an average high school and the kids roaming these hallways are not average high school students.

The pressure to be different from all 4,000 students who attend this high school (or maybe just the 25 kids in your history class) exists deep in the roots of excelling.

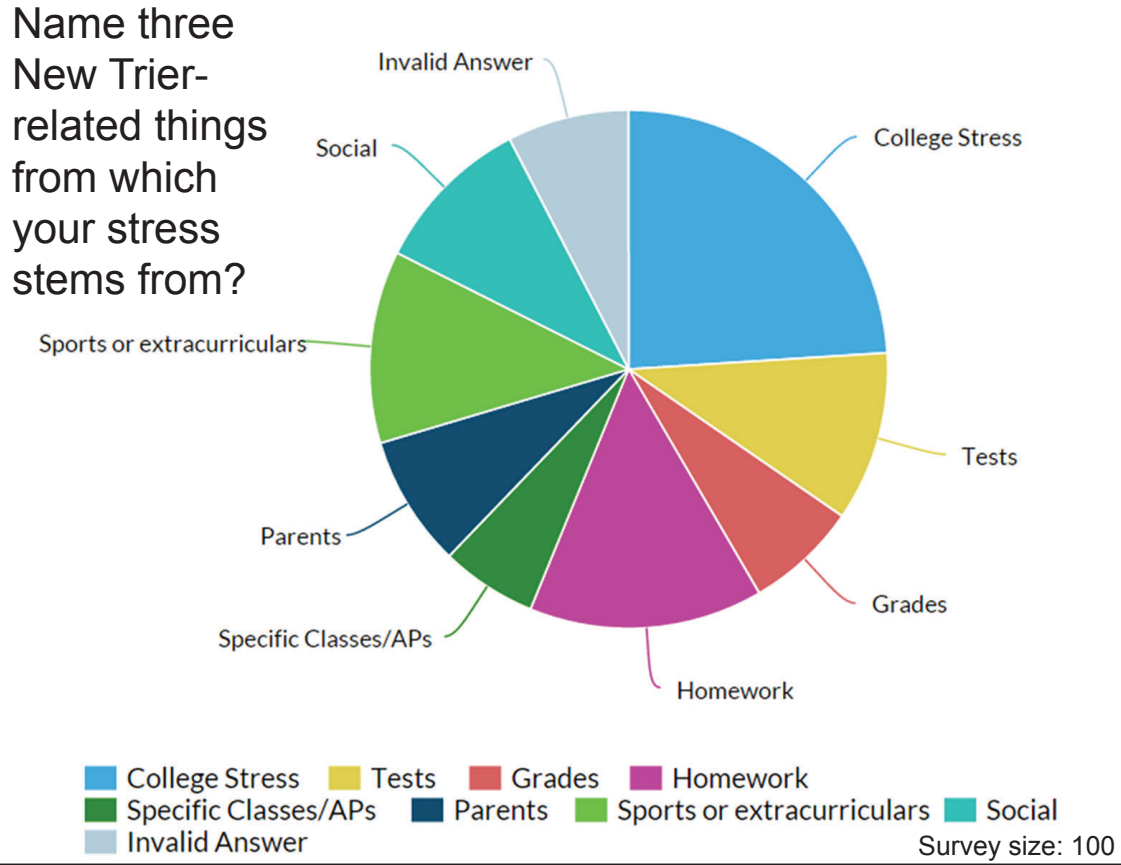
After asking 100 students to name three New Trier-related stressors, the number one answer was college. Senior Robert Kennedy explained these results: "Because kids want to go somewhere that makes people say, 'wow, that's a good school!' But not everybody gets to go to those places."

According to Kennedy, students consider their path after high school a reflection of themselves. This ideology can make students take drastic measures to achieve.

Other categories of pressure mentioned were homework, tests, and grades. All of these, most frequently tests and homework, would be considered stressful if the goal in mind was to do perfectly. Which it is.

Sophomore, Shermeen Kazemi said, "Where you go to college depends on how you do in high school; it [stinks], but it's true." She explained that homework, tests, and grades determine a student's future. This would lead anyone to be anxious at any high school. However,

Name three New Trier-related things from which your stress stems from?



students at New Trier seems to feel a higher level of anxiety due to high expectations from parents, teachers, and peers.

Whether it is the stigma of North Shore excellence or the control of parents, New Trier students bear many external pressures. "Students get stressed from the rigorous

curriculum, [but] also from their parents," Ryan Rafeyan states. Students may also feel personal stress to do well. "...students just tend to put a lot of pressure on themselves," Laura McCormick, a senior, said.

Surprisingly, the results of the survey showed that homework is more stressful than tests. Maddy

Sacks, a senior, said of the outcomes of the poll, "I think homework is more stressful because it has more of an immediate effect. Homework is something you have to turn in the next day, while grades are something you see only once a quarter."

Afternoons during the school week are considered very stressful

for students as well. However, New Trier, again, pushes its students further. Many Trevians do not go straight home at 3:25, but have play rehearsal, a sport, or a club.

Completing homework can become a stressful task, when partnered with so many other things in a student's life. We have an extremely competitive athletic department and an equally incredible theatre department, which leads students to spend hours after school, not doing homework.

"The homework is the testing of your knowledge and also typically harder than the classroom work." Ella Harris, a junior said. "So, it's stressful to be tested on practice work, thinking you need to know it perfectly."

Beyond academic stress, there is the stress that comes with being a teenager. Youna Byun, a junior, said social stresses may directly affect school work. "Besides academics, definitely socially [I get stressed] because you always want to fit in and go out with friends, but sometimes it doesn't work out." These stresses could devastate a student's academic life.

Still, are all of these stresses worthy of our stress?

"I think stress is very common at New Trier because we go to such a competitive school," said McCormick.

## Ranking New Trier, the magazines are doing it wrong

by Nick Merril

Each year, U.S. News and World Report releases a statewide and nationwide list of the best high schools in the country based on academic achievement.

Denise Dubravec, New Trier Principal, disregards this ranking system.

She said, "We believe that the magazine rankings do not at all reflect reality when it comes to how a high school is serving its students."

Principal Dubravec notes that many top schools across the country, which are similar to New Trier, chose not to submit information to these magazines.

*"We believe in offering a rigorous curriculum at an appropriate level for all students, and we provide AP courses as an additional option for upperclassmen."*

However, with publicly available data, some magazines create rankings regardless. Others exclude New Trier from their lists completely.

Dubravec believes that among the numerous problems with the ranking system, one outlying issue is the, "Heavy reliance, or in the case of the Washington Post, their sole reliance on ranking schools based on how many students at a school take

AP tests."

In these rankings, the AP scores don't matter as much as the total number of students who simply take the test.

This ranking system benefits schools that allow all students, regardless of age or school to take APs (New Trier only allows upperclassmen to participate in Advanced Placement courses). Because of this flawed method for ranking schools, New Trier has chosen to disregard the rankings.

Post High School counselor, Deborah Donley, thinks it's alarming that some schools allow incoming freshman to take AP courses.

She said, "Can you imagine taking an AP course as a freshman? High school is a hard enough transition."

Dubravec stresses that confining AP courses to upperclassmen is not a disadvantage for students.

She said, "We believe in offering a rigorous curriculum at an appropriate level for all students, and we provide AP courses as an additional option for upperclassmen."

In this way, New Trier helps students both adequately challenge and develop essential learning skills.

"Freshmen and sophomores are in appropriately sequenced but challenging courses in which the focus is on the best curricular materials and instructional methods for each individual student; we do not assume that Advanced Placement equals 'better,'" said Dubravec.

Donley believes that colleges generally disregard the rankings system, knowing just as well as New

Trier that they are an inadequate source of information.

She said, "I don't think colleges care or know. College admissions are too busy; they don't read the rankings and say, 'Oh he's from this school let's take him.'"

Dubravec adds that despite New Trier's "poor" U.S. News rankings, it's unfair to think New Trier is anything but a first class high school.

"New Trier absolutely is a top tier high school in the state and nation by any logical measure.

College admissions officials regularly convey to our post-high school counselors the high regard in which New Trier is held across the country, and the reputation for success that New Trier students have once they enter college."

New Trier displays this every year with its consistently dominant ACT test scores.

Dubravec also adds, "For the Class of 2014, New Trier's average composite ACT score was 27.4 (compared to a state average of 20.7). That score is the highest for any open enrollment high school in the state and has been for many years running."

New Trier's rankings have been decreasing at the same time that its average ACT score has been increasing.

This is a puzzling statistic for an equally puzzling ranking system that fails to take into account crucial pieces of data, like ACT scores.

Despite tremendous efforts made by the administration to maintain New Trier's high academic excellence, Dubravec attributes it to two things: the excellence of its teachers and its students.

## Doctorates, and Masters, and bears. Oh, my

by Max Borushek

New Trier is widely regarded as one of the best high schools in the state of Illinois, but most of this praise is directed at students, because of test scores and GPA.

However, one core part of the education here often goes unnoticed: the teachers themselves.

Whether they are the bane of a student's existence or role models who inspire everyone to do their best in schools, they are an essential part of a student's success at New Trier.

The educational backgrounds of New Trier teachers may surprise a lot of students, as many New Trier teachers have graduated from schools like Columbia, Northwestern, University of Chicago, Yale, Vanderbilt, and other elite colleges.

*[T]hey [the teachers] are an essential part of a student's success at New Trier.*

Most teachers have gone beyond just a bachelors degree and have received a Masters degree. Several teachers have gone all the way, and have received PhD's and continue to teach at New Trier.

One teacher that has gone through the process of earning her doctorate is Aileen Heidkamp, who has a Ed.D in Curriculum and Education from Loyola University and teaches in the English department.

Before she earned her doctorate in 2008, Heidkamp received her Bachelors Degree from Stanford and

in 1999 she went back to school to earn her Masters in Teaching from the University of San Francisco.

"I was out one or two nights per week to go to class, and I worked on my reading and writing for school on the weekends. At that time, I had small children, so I was teaching only part-time," Heidkamp said in regards to what she had to go through to get her Doctorate in Education.

Another teacher who had to go through a lot to achieve his Ph.D is Kevin Hendren, who teaches in the Science department.

Hendren received his Ph.D in Science and Education from Georgia State University and also has a Bachelors Degree from Denison and a Masters in Education from Emory University.

"It took me about 7 years, and one year I had to go to school full time and take 2 classes a quarter for four quarters, so I couldn't teach for a full year," said Hendren when talking about how long it took to receive his Ph.D.

In total, New Trier has about 9 teachers who have earned a Doctorate, and most other teachers who have earned a Masters degree, either in education or a related field of study.

Regardless of what kind of degree a teacher has, New Trier has a large and well educated staff who represent a vast variety of colleges and universities.

Clearly, there is a reason that many people across the country come to the New Trier district to raise their children: it's because they know the staff at New Trier is top notch and they know their kids will receive a quality education.