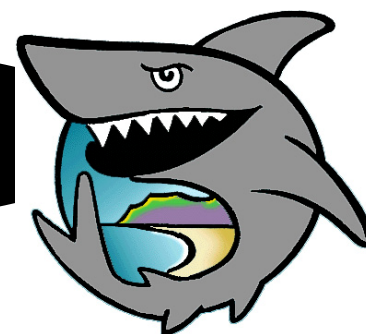


Moving From Good to Great



Volume 1, Issue 1

Summer 2007

Student Voices:

“MHS is making me into a person that I can respect. My courseload challenges me on many levels, and that combined with sports makes my life exciting and interesting.”

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MHS Student Survey Results

Malibu High School is a good school. Its rigorous curriculum, enriching 6-12 environment, and high college-going rate signifies to all that we are a high-quality public school. The challenge now is to move our school from good to great. Great high schools share three key qualities known as the new 3Rs: Rigor, Relevance and Relationships. Last year, a group of MHS teachers, parents, and students developed a survey to find out how our school works to achieve these 3Rs. In this first “Moving from Good to Great” newsletter, we highlight the survey responses of students. Thanks to the cooperation of teachers and students, almost every single student completed the survey and offered very thoughtful comments and suggestions about their school experience.



RIGOR: All students should be intellectually challenged and have access to college prep courses such as algebra, writing, and chemistry.

RELEVANCE: The school should engage students in meaningful learning experiences that are relevant to their lives, hopes and dreams.

RELATIONSHIPS: Young people must learn in an environment where they feel known, safe, and respected.

Quick Facts

- 1069 students responded
- 46% play a school sport
- 30% in drama or music
- 43% in MHS clubs/activities
- 56% take regular/CP courses
- 44% take honors/AP courses

Gender Differences



53% male	48% female
54% sports	36%
25% drama/music	36%
40% clubs	46%
57% regular courses	51%
43% honors/AP	49%

Hmmmm...?

- 55% admit to copying other students' homework
- 52% read Cliff or Spark notes in place of original texts
- 72% fail to complete homework for all their classes
- 73% skip activities that are important to them because of homework.

Too Much Homework?



69% of all MHS students report staying up past bedtime at least once a week (36% almost every night) to get their homework done

20% report that they've had their parents complete part of their homework to get it all done



From Students to Teachers: Homework Suggestions

When asked for their comments and suggestions about academic rigor, 509 students chimed in. The majority offered advice for how to alleviate homework stress. For example...

I understand the need for all the homework that teachers have to give us to help us learn and succeed, but sometimes staying up late because of homework hurts me more than helps me. The next day in school I am really tired and can't concentrate as well as I would like, and don't learn as much as I could.

Some courses have unnecessary busy work that is assigned every night that should be eliminated. Homework should be limited to assignments that engage our thoughts and allow us to learn new and useful information.

Alternate days of homework, e.g., science and math on Mondays and Wednesdays.

We need more homework that reinforces and allows us to see a new meaning to what we have been taught, and less mindless problems to solve.

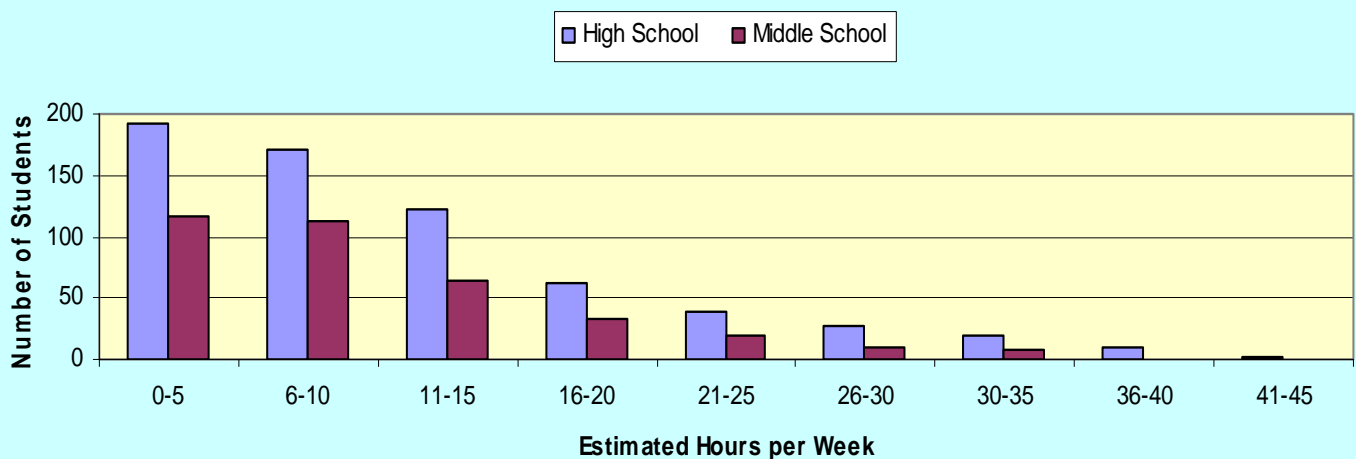
To make learning more meaningful and relevant to students' lives, it is imperative to assign less busy work, e.g., 20 math problems that have basically the same steps for completion.

Compare things with other subjects, make them all connect.

Teachers should work together to make tests and homework more evenly distributed.

AP means college level education, including attitude towards students, maturity of assignment. It does not mean hours and hours of homework. Treat students with more respect and maturity. Just because we are going through puberty does not mean that we should be treated like a child. We are students and if you offer us a motivational education we will be students, if you offer us discipline and authority issues we will be children.

Student Estimates of Homework Hours



Regular/College Prep vs. Honors/AP

Most students start out in the same, college-prep courses in middle school; by 12th grade about a third of students report taking “regular” college prep courses and two thirds report taking honors/Advanced Placement courses or a mix of the two. Students who are involved

in school sports, arts programs, clubs and other activities are more likely to be taking honors/AP courses. **75%** of students report that honors and AP classes offer a more intellectually stimulating environment than the “regular/college prep” courses

33% think that MHS should offer more honors/AP courses and **63%** think the courses offerings should stay the same. Overall, most students agree that regular/college prep courses offer a less stressful classroom environment with a lighter homework load.

Meaningful Learning at MHS: Examples from Students

The following examples were given by several students:

6th Grade Humanities Projects

Mrs. Schellkopf's cell project

Mr. Bream's Painting project, Chilvary, Islam and Africa units

Mr. Murphy's free-choice science presentations

English/Writer's Workshop classes

Mr. Carrier's 10th-grade Holocaust project and honors English classes

Science labs

Ms. Bowman-Smith's photography classes

Creative writing projects

Government projects, court cases and cartoons/editorials

Music and art classes

The Decade Project

Mr. Bream's art project in 7th grade was very fun, it gave us all a chance to learn and discover our creative sides that we didn't know we have. Now we have a painting to have all our lives to show we accomplished something. Also chivalry was fun too. It was almost like an imaginary game but learning while doing it. If teachers made learning more fun I think they would have better students.

The way Mr. Murphy teaches tells us about physical science and how it applies to the real world and our lives. I find myself making connections everyday about what he teaches me.

I have really enjoyed the out of school experiences, such as Zuma, or going to places like ropes. The things that involve physical involvement such as labs, or having a civil war reenactor come, make what we are learning much more exciting.

I like book reports because you learn so much about one thing like in biographies you learn about people and later on you remember and tell your relatives.

The project that dealt with the Holocaust in Mr. Carrier's 10th

grade honors English class, in which we were given the option to do a wide variety of projects, including interviewing a Holocaust survivor. I interviewed a Holocaust survivor and it was one of the most meaningful experiences of my life.

Creative writing lets me express my inner-self without hiding anything. I say and write what I feel without worrying if I'll be shunned for my views or ideas or thoughts. It's one of the best classes ever

My calculus and physics classes both offer extremely challenging work loads and they relate to one another. This shows me the real world uses of the math that we learn, rather than just teaching us equations. In my opinion these two courses have been some of the best two courses that I have taken at Malibu High.

I am currently part of the Blast Beat organization where students make a mini music corporation and will put on a battle of the bands. This has helped me better understand what kind of a worker/leader I am and how well I interact with fellow students...I strongly believe that this will help me in the future.

system so that more may be devoted to a few subjects each day.

A lot can be learned through experience, and experiencing things in Science, History and even English could help students to learn more and think more about the subject.

% students who report having had a meaningful or exciting project, assignment, or learning experience at MHS...**47%**

I would like my teachers to talk more about how what I am learning is meaningful and relates to life.

Connect what we are learning in one class to another class more often!

Ask the students what they enjoy, and relate the lesson to that topic.

When teachers can relate the topics they are teaching to our life, it makes it easier to understand the concept.

We need more freedom to design our own projects so we can connect to the world and grow up as functional adults instead of robots that follow directions from a piece of paper.

The only significance high school seems to have is in relation to where we go to college and that's why there's so much apathy and cheating and lack of interest.

Student Advice: Make Learning more relevant

Give students time to ask about current events that they have heard about. Sometimes it doesn't have to be relevant to school. I always love a good conversation that I learn from without meaning to.

More hands-on things so [we] don't have to sit down for 7 hours.

We should have more fun learning activities with different age groups doing stuff together.

Students should be able to choose topics they study or write about that is relevant to their interests.

It would be very fun to have more labs and a block schedule

Malibu High School

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Moving From Good to Great



This newsletter is the first in a series of community publications intended to spark debate, inquiry, and change.

Relationships

How many students have a least one adult on campus they could go to for help in solving a problem? **78%**

How many students would like more opportunities to connect with teachers one-on-one? **55%**

How many students report having strong and trusting peer relationships? **87%**

How many students would like more opportunities to connect with other students on campus? **65%**

The bottom line is that the relationship between students and teachers should (in my view) be one of mutual respect. The most productive, meaningful classes I have taken at MHS have been taught by teachers who were willing to listen to their students - both in terms of sharing ideas and adjusting workloads. I firmly believe that students will be most motivated to apply themselves in their classes when they have genuinely positive relationships with their teachers - when all parties involved understand that the others are people with needs and time constraints just like their own.

I think we should have more social events like dances. We don't have enough. Also, if there were some way to get more people involved in social events at school, it would make the experience even better.

School respect its easier to learn when you're in a nice, clean and effective learning place.

I think we should get more time to talk with our friends and play.

I always look forward to seeing my friends at lunch and nutrition. My friends are irreplaceable, they have helped me through my toughest times and never made me feel like I am alone. I am proud to know them but more proud to call them my friends.

I have strong relationships at school, the class distinctions kind of melt away after sophomore year, allowing the upper class to increasingly intermingle. Playing sports has helped me achieve this the fastest.

I think it would be really cool if when we worked in class, we always worked in

partners. That could help a LOT of people's social rank, and help new kids make friends. It could have a lot of benefits.

Allow more class time for students, other students, and teachers to actually get to know each other as people.

I think Martin Van Buren said it best when he said 'the more we know each other the more we understand each other' and I think we as students need more opportunities to connect and speak with each other. In this way we will be able to live in a more harmonious environment and reduce gang violence. I suggest additional outreach programs in which students of all backgrounds will be able to connect with each other on a deeper level.

