

DUAL ENROLLMENT AND STRESS: THRIVING OR SURVIVING?

A research project conducted by Dual Enrollment Students at
Florida State College at Jacksonville

“Dual Enrollment Stress”

A survey conducted by

What

KIDS

Can do

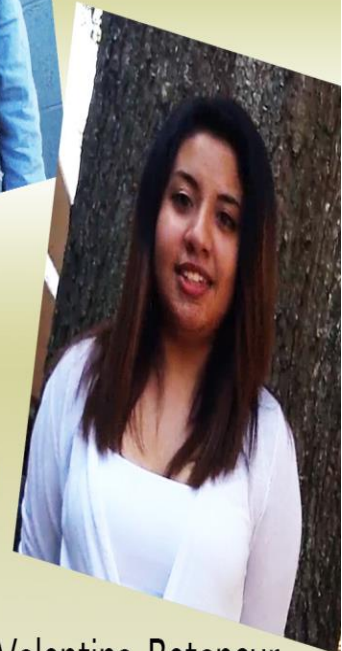
Grant funded by WKCD.org



Nada Hussein



Julie Ngo



Valentina Betancur

PREFACE:

For the past twelve years, I have been afforded the privilege of working with whom I consider to be some of the brightest and most talented students in the state of Florida, and possibly our nation. This last academic year was no exception. I was provided an opportunity and a pleasure to supervise a grant funded, active research project conducted by a group of high school dual enrollment students attending Florida State College at Jacksonville. These exceptional students participated in a mixed methods research study, which yielded findings that may now be used by education professionals as talking points and strategies for program development, and practical life management strategies for students.

Research confirms that students who are engaged in educational activities beyond the classroom are more likely to be successful. With that in mind, I encourage educators and parents to seek opportunities to engage their students in activities that connect students with resources in the education community. The Association of American Colleges and Universities has identified 10 High Impact Educational Practices. Undergraduate Research is one of the successful practices that proves to exhibit lasting impact on student engagement and success. The information provided in this booklet illustrates the outcome of undergraduate research. It also provides insight into student's dual enrollment experience, and suggests recommendations for further research.

A special word of thanks is extended to Dr. Cervone of *What Kids Can Do, Inc.* for her encouragement, support, and genuine desire to help young people achieve phenomenal success. I hope the findings of this project will provide motivation and encouragement to students, parents, and education professionals as we all strive to create opportunities for students to thrive and succeed.

Naita B. Guine, MA

Dual Enrollment Coordinator and Research Project Supervisor
Florida State College at Jacksonville – Kent Campus

INTRODUCTION:

In August of 2014, the idea to create a Model United Nations club at Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) was proposed. Founded by dual enrollment student, Nada Hussein, and with the help of two other participants/dual enrollment students: Valentina Betancur and Julie Ngo, another idea would soon come from this group: write a plan for a research project. Almost 6 months after receiving the grant, both of the goals the researchers hoped to accomplish had become reality. The researchers wrote a research project that examines the causes and effects of stress on home-school, private-school, and public-school dual enrollment students. How did they pick such an intricate topic, one might ask? Well, all three researchers in this project were members of a Dual Enrollment program at their high school, Robert E. Lee Senior High, in Jacksonville, Florida. Moreover, with the help from their sponsor, Ms. Naita Guine, the Model United Nations club was presented with an opportunity that intertwined with the main focus of the Model United Nations Club: to get students to talk about an issue that affects them and their community. All three researchers thought this was a perfect way to give back to their community of peers; picking a project that researches the effects of stress on dual-enrolled students.



WHAT IS DUAL ENROLLMENT?

Dual Enrollment is an opportunity for high school students to receive high school and college credit simultaneously. Dual enrollment can help a student accelerate his or her educational goals, eliminate duplication between high school and college course content, and increase the rigor and challenge of course offerings while in high school. Students may enroll in academic college-level courses and/or career and technical courses. Depending on educational and career goals, students may earn college credits that are transferable to Florida State Colleges and Universities. Tuition is free to high school dual enrollment students, and to be eligible, students must attend a secondary school covered by an articulation agreement with Florida State College and meet state mandated requirements for GPA and standardized test scores. (Florida State College at Jacksonville, 2014). Currently, FSCJ maintains articulation agreements with Duval and Nassau County Public School Districts (Primary service counties), home school families, Charter Schools, Private Schools and Secondary School Districts in Northeast Florida.

BEGINNING OF RESEARCH PROJECT:

WRITING THE GRANT

When the researchers learned of the possible opportunity to participate in a grant funded research project sponsored by What Kids Can Do, Inc., they were intrigued. With less than three weeks before the proposal deadline, researchers had to select a topic and write the grant proposal and budget. Many ideas were tossed around:

- What is the effectiveness of testing in the public education system?
- What are the effects of teen texting and driving?

- Does having a course textbooks affect your final grade?
- The effects of stress on dual enrolled students.

The researchers decided that studying effects of stress on dual enrollment students would have the most impactful results, and they decided to move forward with this topic. The grant application and proposal included a detailed explanation of every research action.. After the grant was written, the researchers solicited the help of the research supervisor, Ms. Naita Guine, and the proposal was submitted and approved by the College’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) within days. With only one day to spare, the proposal was submitted.

RECEIVING THE GRANT

Within 16 days of application and proposal submission, the announcement was made, and the proposal; “Stress and Dual Enrollment: Thriving or Surviving?” was awarded. After patiently waiting all day, the researchers finally received the email confirming what they had hoped for: The Model United Nations Committee at Florida State College at Jacksonville, Kent Campus had been awarded the What Kids Can Do Grant! With only six months to complete the project, the research team took immediate action.

The committee engaged in a video chat with Dr. Barbara Cervone of What Kids Can Do, Inc. Dr. Cervone relayed congratulations to the researchers, and details about the proposal were discussed. Next, a budget was established by the College to provide access to monies for the grant.

STUDENT SURVEY

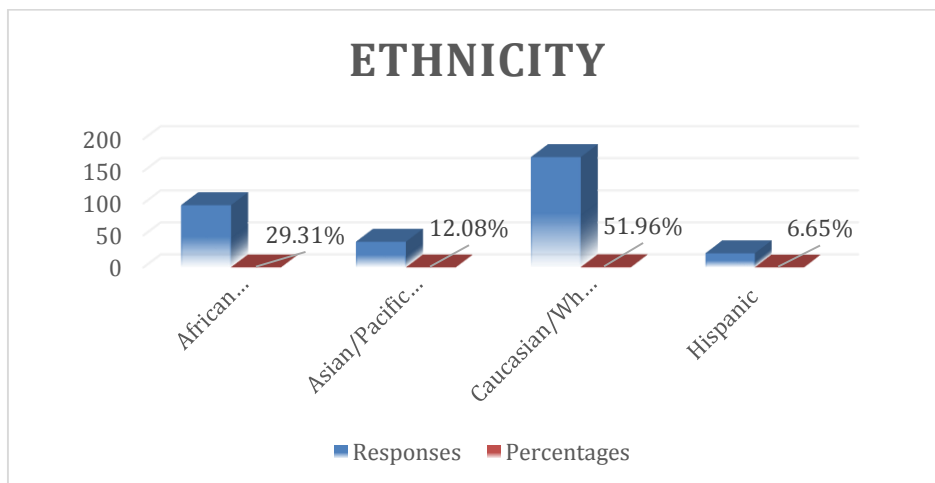
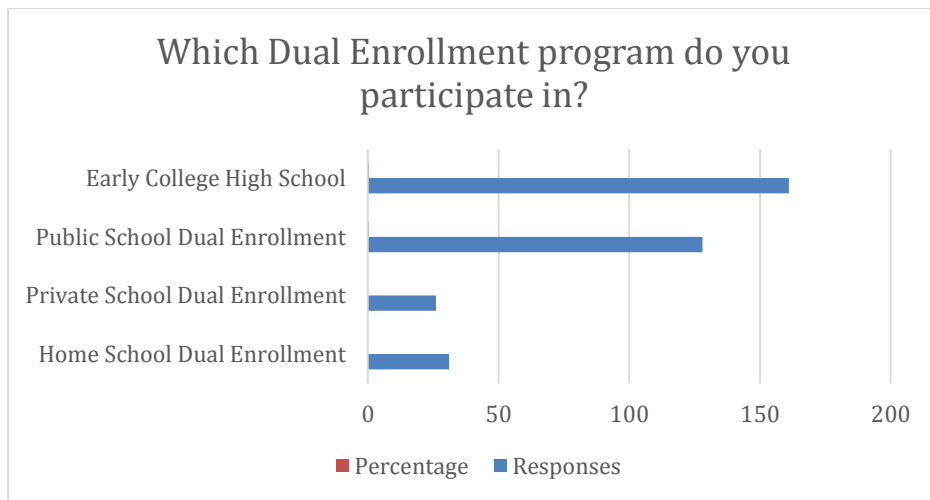
CREATION OF SURVEY

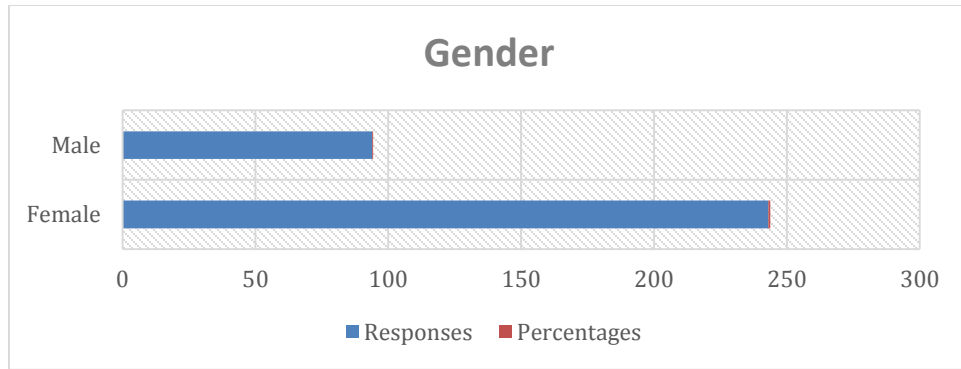
To ensure that a well-developed survey was created, the research team sought advice from the Research and Student Analytics Department of the College. Strategies and tips were shared to help researchers create a tool that would provide survey participants the opportunity to share

their insight and experience, and to ensure that researchers received enough data to explore the topic sufficiently.

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY?

With the help from the FSCJ Dual Enrollment Administrative Offices, researchers created an email distribution list of every currently enrolled dual enrollment student in at Florida State College at Jacksonville. An email explaining the survey and its purpose was distributed to all students, and a link for the online survey was provided. Due to the short grant timeline, the survey was only open for four days. More than 3,000 dual enrollment students were asked to participate, and within four days approximately 400 survey responses were received.





SURVEY QUESTIONS

Which Dual Enrollment program do you participate in?

Where do you attend your Dual Enrollment classes?

Please select your gender?

Please select your ethnic background?

Since the beginning of the school year, what are the top five things that cause you the most stress?

Do you feel stressed?

What is your level of stress? (1=low / 5=high)

Do you think your stress level is healthy or harmful?

Do you feel like you have control over your stress?

How do you deal with stress?

What are some of the daily contributors to your stress level?

Have you experienced the impact of negative stress in your life? How?

Have you experienced the positive impact of stress in your life? How?

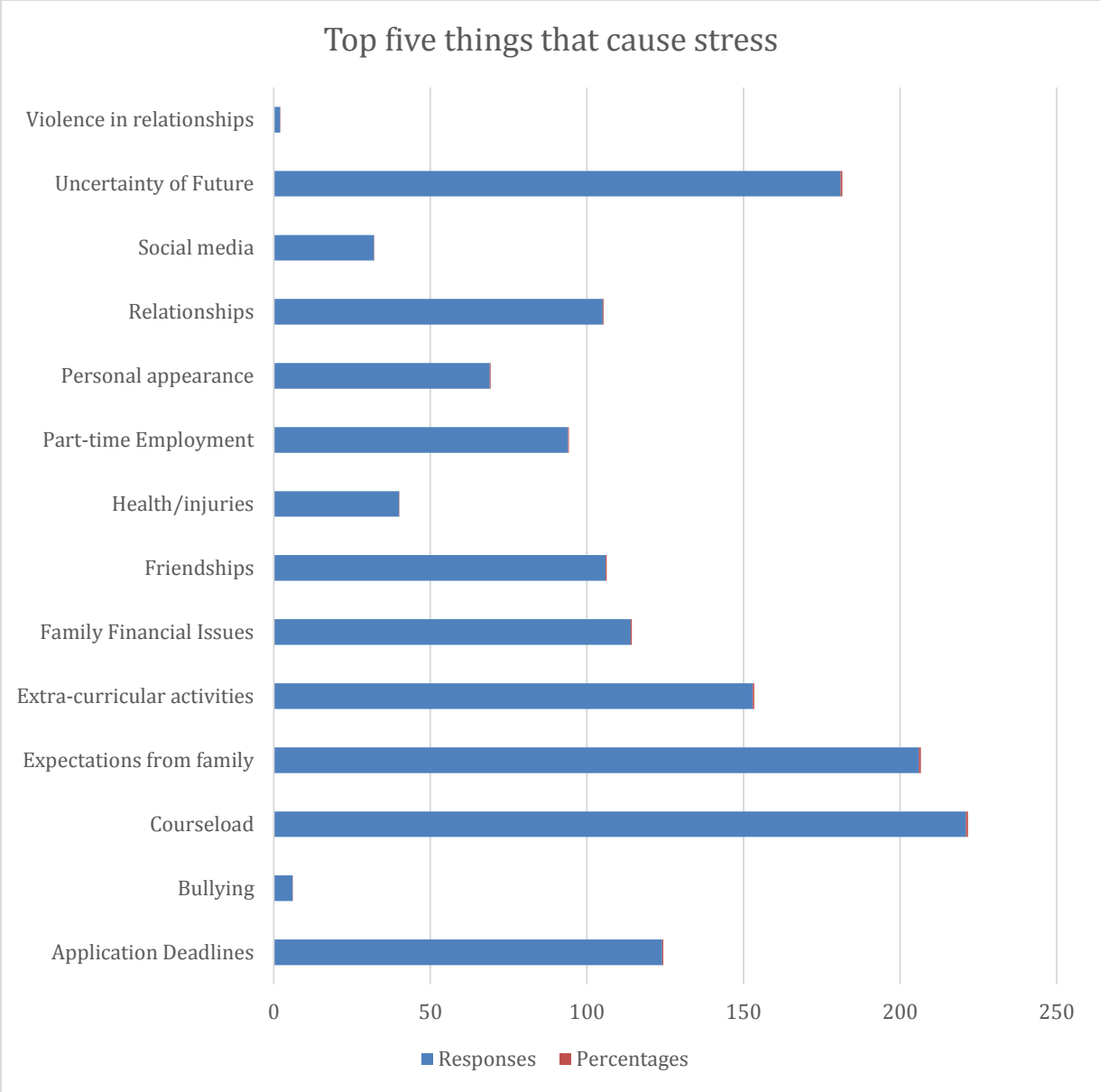
Do you feel supported in your Dual Enrollment program and activities?

If you feel supported in your Dual Enrollment program and activities, who provides the greatest level of support?

INTERESTING FINDINGS FROM SURVEY RESULTS:

Question 5: Since the beginning of the school year, what are the top five things that cause you the most stress?

This question yielded unexpected findings. As expected, the leading stressor for dual enrollment students was Workload. 66% of students agreed that workload from college classes caused them the most stress. Workload is a common struggle among college, but dual enrollment students can be considered at a disadvantage because many times they have not yet developed the proper time management skills necessary for success at a collegiate level. A close second (61%) of survey respondents identified expectations from family as a major contributor to stress. This came as a surprise to the researchers because later in the survey students identified family and parents as being their strongest supporters throughout their participation in the dual enrollment program. The third highest stressor at 54% was “the uncertainty of the future.” Because dual enrollment students have begun their post-secondary education journey, this leaves them less time than their counterparts to explore their own interests and decide which career path they want to follow. Extra-curricular activities (46%) was next on the list of the top stressors. This stressor is not surprising because it is common for high school students to participate in extra-curricular activities. Many colleges and universities want to see a well-rounded student, and to rise to these expectations, students not only engage in rigorous coursework, but they participate in many extracurricular activities and community service activities which can quickly lead to overwhelming stress.

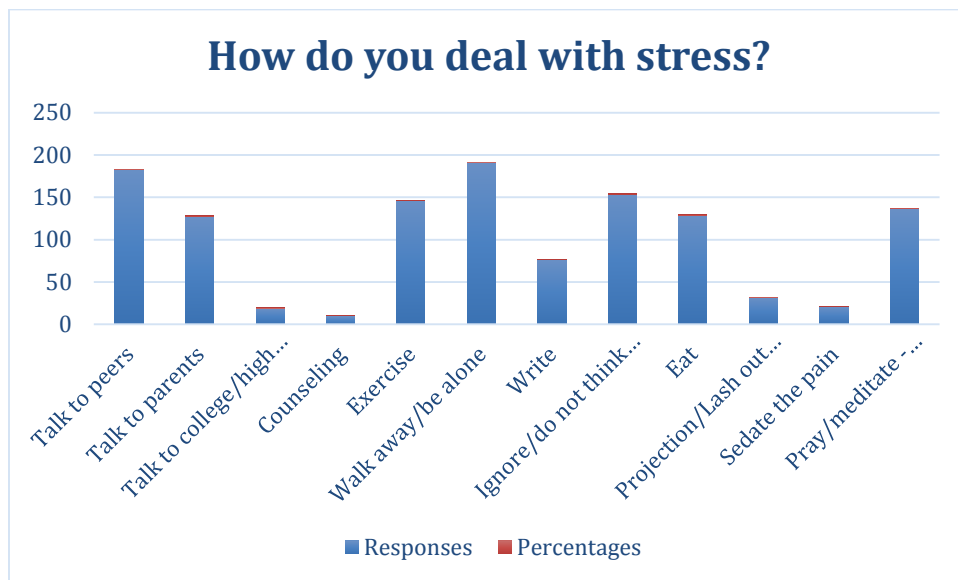


Question 10: How do you deal with stress?

When constructing this question, it was important to include a spectrum of options for survey participants to choose from. Options included healthy and unhealthy ways of dealing. It was a pleasant surprise to find that the data collected from this question revealed that the vast majority of students manage their stress in healthy ways. Almost half of the students surveyed chose exercise as one of the ways that they manage stress. It should also be noted that communication is another popular way for students to deal with their stress. 54% of the students surveyed said

that talking to their peers helped them deal with stress, and 37% said that talking to their parents also helped. However, although communication is an important stress management technique, communication with guidance counselors and other educational staff members is not a widely used technique. 5.6% of students surveyed talk to college/ high school faculty, and as little as 2.95% of students selected any form of academic counseling as an option.

The survey results revealed that one of the most popular forms of stress management among dual enrollment students is to walk away and/or be alone. This method is not necessarily good or bad. While being alone too long can pose a problem, it can also be healthy to take a breath of fresh air and come back to the problem at-hand refreshed and renewed. Of course, not all students handle their stress in a healthy way. The research also indicated that the third most popular way that stress is managed is to ignore it or to not think about it at all. This can have a negative impact on academic progress, because it can lead to behaviors such as procrastination, low work ethic, and ultimately resulting in negative grades. This method can even lead to other poor stress management techniques such as eating unnecessarily.



FOCUS GROUPS:

After the completion of the survey, it was time to move to the personal account portion of the project, the focus group. In order to conduct effective focus groups, the researchers turned again to the College for assistance. Training from the First Year Advising Department of the College, researchers were provided with insight about conducting effective focus groups; such as posture, body language, tone, avoiding “Yes/No” questions, being unbiased, and strategies to keep the conversation flowing.

Three focus groups were conducted. One focus group was conducted at Florida State College at Jacksonville – Kent Campus, and one at South Campus. Finally, an Alumni group was added. The focus groups were comprised of traditional dual enrollment students representing public schools, home schools, private schools. The focus group questions were developed based on the data analyzed from survey results. Both focus groups were scheduled for an hour, however, neither required that amount of time. A total of 20 students and alumni participated in three different focus groups. Pizza and bottled water was provided for participants.

Focus Group with Dual Enrollment Alumni

While conducting research among students at the home school, public school, and private school levels, the researchers realized their research was incomplete without being able to look at the long term effects of stress and dual enrollment. The researchers realized they needed to acquire information detailing the impact of the dual enrollment program on students in their future endeavors. Using the same strategies, the researchers decided the best way to acquire alumni information was to conduct a third and final focus group comprised of former dual enrollment students. Considering that Ms. Naita Guine has maintained lasting professional relationships with students, it was not difficult to find students who would agree to participate in

helping the researchers. The graduation dates from alumni who agreed to participate in this focus group was 2009-2014.

CONCLUSION:

The results from this survey provides students, parents, faculty and administrators with information that can be used to assist students with stress management. This research revealed that there are three positive impacts from stress: the ability to perform highly on academic endeavors, the ability to meet deadlines, and the ability to focus on the task at hand.

However, the fact that less than 6% of students reach out to educational counselors at the high school or college could be an indication that this is an area that should be addressed. It appears that there are many opportunities missed by students to connect with educational resources through their academic and educational advisors. Lastly, not all stress is bad, and the results from this project supports the idea that good stress can lead to productive and successful behavior.

The results revealed that the key to managing the stress associated with dual enrollment is finding the right support. 55% of the respondents feel supported by family, and 82% indicated that they feel supported by their peers. Dual enrollment is an incredible opportunity, and the Alumni Focus Group confirmed that the stress associated dual enrollment is definitely worth it in the long run. As stated by one alumnae, Mr. Adam Smith, RN/BSN, “the time invested now (dual enrollment) will better prepare you for future success.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Student Researchers

Valentina Betancur, Robert E. Lee High School & Florida State College at Jacksonville

Nada Hussein, Robert E. Lee High School & Florida State College at Jacksonville

Julie Ngo, Robert E. Lee High School & Florida State College at Jacksonville

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Shelby Inger

Tyler Juhan

Jonelle Lyken

Adam Smith

William Yates

Dual Enrollment Stress Video Presentation

Dual Enrollment Students

Valentina Betancur
Alexia Finn
Bailey Griffin
Nada Hussein
David Lewis
Julie Ngo
Ken Nguyen
Manija Sidiqi
Antoine Watley

Testimonials from Alumni

Tyler Juhan
Jonelle Lyken
Adam Smith
William Yates

A Word of Thanks to.....

Ms. Mary-Ann Bodine Al-Sharif, Focus Group Trainer, Florida State College at Jacksonville

Mr. Paul Hoffman, Multimedia Specialist, Florida State College at Jacksonville

Mr. Steve Kruszewki, Asst. Research Analyst, Florida State College at Jacksonville

Ms. Jennifer Peterson, Resource Development Officer, Florida State College at Jacksonville

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Dr. Richard Greene, Dean of Liberal Arts, Florida State College at Jacksonville – Kent Campus

Dr. Ian Neuhard, Campus President, Florida State College at Jacksonville – Kent Campus

This project could not have been accomplished without the support of:

Dr. Barbara Cervone, Founder and President of What Kids Can Do, Inc. and Next Generation Press.

For more information about this student research project, please contact Ms. Naita Guine at nguine@fscj.edu or (904) 381-3707.