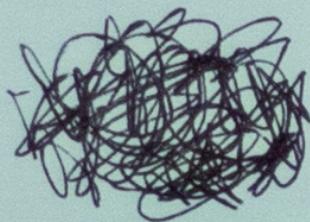


# PANO

## PANORAMA

LADUE HORTON WATKINS HIGH SCHOOL  
1201 S. WARSON RD.  
ST. LOUIS, MO 63124  
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everything is collapsing,  
but slowly & quietly





# RUNNING ON EMPTY

Examining how burnout has affected students and staff in the past year

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“I wake up in the morning, and I’m exhausted,” junior David Ciorba began, listing the classes, sports and extracurricular activities that lie ahead. Ciorba’s day can start as early as 5:30 a.m. with a workout, then to school by 7 a.m. where he will stay until 5 p.m., having finished diving or wrestling practice. Ciorba’s first moment of spare time — spent playing Animal Crossing or relaxing with his little brother — begins at 9:30 p.m., 16 hours after the first (or second, or third) alarm of the morning. And although this is David Ciorba’s story, the harsh reality is that it’s eerily similar to many Ladue students.

“When the stress level gets so high, we almost shut down,” 11th grade counselor Dr. Claire Welton said. “Stress can manifest itself in very different ways in different people. You can see it as mental breakdowns, in social anxiety, in schooling anxiety and in school avoidance.”

This is burnout.

Because it takes different forms in each individual, burnout’s symptoms

vary as well. However, the most commonly seen symptoms are extreme exhaustion, feelings of hopelessness, mood swings, insomnia and difficulty completing everyday tasks such as hygiene, cleaning or organization.

## ACADEMIC BURNOUT

Although Ladue boasts academic excellence and acceptances from elite colleges, the price paid is steep; when students try to maintain their grades, play sports, participate in clubs and apply to colleges all at once, they stretch themselves so thin they snap.

“On one hand, sometimes I do appreciate the competitive culture within Ladue since it really can push you to achieve more,” freshman Bohan Pan said. “But

at the same time, it can be stressful and tiring. Competing creates a lot of stress to do well.”

## EXTRACURRICULAR BURNOUT

The narrative of what a high schooler should be has changed. In order to decrease the pressure on test scores and grades, institutions moved towards ho-

listic reviews of candidates. But inadvertently, this ended up manufacturing formulaic approaches to what students should be spending free time doing in order to offer colleges a depersonalized display of their potentials.

“In sports, specifically, there’s a motivation to specialize,” Ciorba said. “But as someone who likes to do a lot of different stuff, I don’t really want to specialize in just one sport, so I’m diving and wrestling. That’s pretty difficult because it takes a lot of time. In both seasons, there comes a point where practice feels like it’s five hours long, because I’m just ready to go and things get really repetitive. If my goals aren’t always met, I feel super down. A lot of times, I can’t really enjoy the same things that I might have enjoyed prior.”

## CREATIVE BURNOUT

Eileen Suarez, like most seniors, has been swept up in the college application process. She seeks acceptance into an art school, which means that her applications — as well as her burnout — looks a lot different.

“For me, burnout from schoolwork is a lot easier to deal with,” Suarez said. “Especially because I can stop doing the homework and just talk to my teachers. With creative burnout, it’s just me and my own expectations. Around middle school, there was a certain period in my

life that I just stopped drawing for, like three to four years. And even though a lot of people would tell me, ‘wow, you’re so good,’ ‘you should be an artist’ or ‘you should do art when you grow up,’ I wanted to tell them [that] I don’t have it in me anymore. My hands could move and physically I could draw, but I still couldn’t make art.”

## EDUCATOR BURNOUT

Balancing student wellbeing, academic skill gaps, curriculum requirements and their own needs post-pandemic has exacerbated stress levels among teachers. Since 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. is dedicated to school, chemistry and A. P. chemistry teacher Alyson Levine is just one of dozens who find it difficult to maintain a balance between their work and personal life.

“The school year is like a fast marathon, but people just have to keep going and going and going,” Levine said. “COVID made it worse. As a teacher, you have to get all the material done and you have to worry about everybody. I try to make sure all the kids are doing well [and] everything is okay with them socially, emotionally and ac-

ademically. They really lost a year of social, emotional and academic rigor. It’s not that they can’t do it — they forgot how to.”

## BEYOND BURNOUT

“Students are feeling like they can’t adjust; they might be used to going out 100 miles an hour, but really they need to slow down a bit,” Welton said. “Students should know their warning signs and make sure that when they see those warning signs, they [can] veer off and [get] support from a counselor, friends or parents.”

Welton emphasizes that asking for assistance is never a sign of weakness, but the opposite. Being honest enough to recognize the limits of what’s feasible is incredibly difficult in the modern day busy culture, but it remains a crucial step towards building stronger mentalities.

“I try to breathe,” sophomore MJ Bezzant said. “I go outside and get some fresh air before races or listen to music.

It’s an outlet, it’s a good way to calm you down before you’re about to jump into the water.” ☐

Illustration by | OLIVIA HU

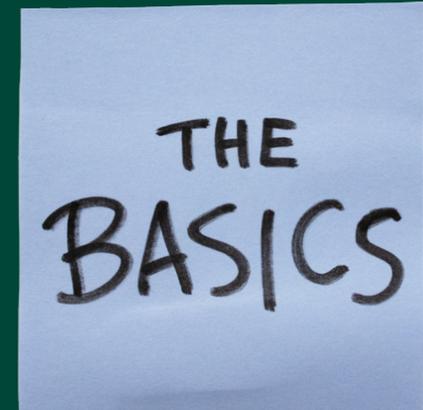


**READ  
MORE  
ABOUT**

burnout from students  
and staff interviews

# BALANCING BURNOUT

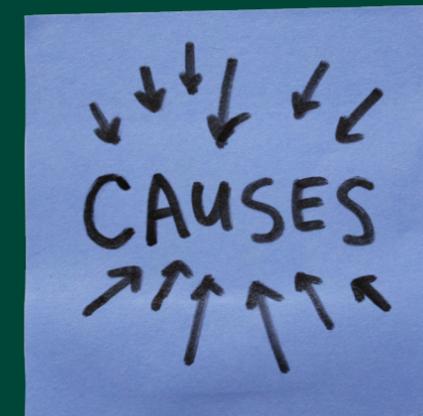
Looking at common causes, symptoms and treatments of burnout in students



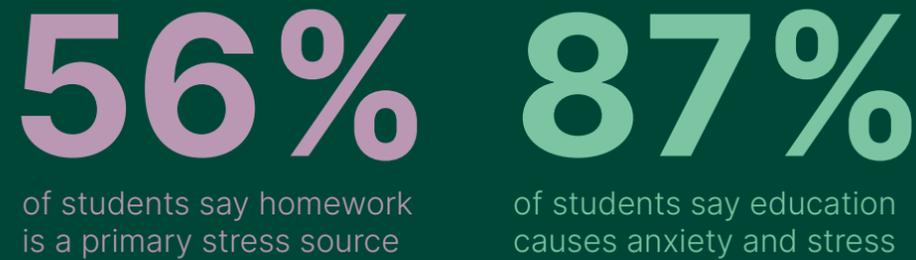
Student burnout rates during COVID-19



illustration by | JOANNE SUNG & MAC HUFFMAN



Students spend **17.5 HOURS** on homework a week, enough to watch the entire "Harry Potter" Series



### PHYSICAL

- Frequent headaches
- Change in sleeping and eating habits



### EMOTIONAL

- Loss of motivation
- Lack of satisfaction with accomplishments



### BEHAVIORAL

- Procrastination
- Withdrawing from responsibilities



1. Find the source of the burnout



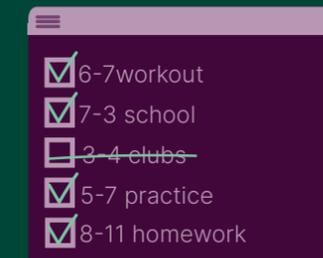
2. Take time to do things you enjoy



3. Reduce work load



4. Reorganize schedule



5. Incorporate in the long run



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### The Trevor Project

- Mental health services for LGBTQ+ youth
- Trevor Lifeline: 1-866-488-7386
- Trevor Text: START to 678-678



### WashU's Psychological Service Center

- Low-cost or free mental health treatment
- Call and set up: 314-935-6555



### Calm

- Breathing and meditation sessions
- Helps reduce anxiety and stress
- Users can download in app store



### Happify

- Games and activities developed by scientists
- Specialized in positive psychology and cognitive behavior



### Help When You Need It

- Search for local health clinics and therapists in price range
- Listings for mental health, social services and substance abuse



### Headspace

- Meditation app with access to guided lessons
- Helps users decompress and maintain a healthy balance in life

Sources: healthline, understood, help guide, Harvard business review, ADA, Ohio state

I suffer with  
Finding motivation or  
meaning in everything

exhausted all the  
time & unmotivated

I need to take a  
mental health break but  
I can't between tests and  
quizzes

can't keep  
up.



I've had to  
do some homework  
the others and  
class I can  
- I got a 30  
math quiz so  
have time to  
- I feel to do  
things I enjoy  
procrastinate ev  
- I don't even  
ask all my teach  
because seem

I'm so mentally  
exhausted and  
i'm at the point  
where I'm  
breaking down  
crying every night

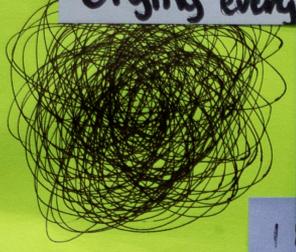
MENTALLY  
DRAINED.

foggy  
clouded

I feel very  
overwhelmed.

exhausted

I wanna drop out



School makes me  
burned out 24/7.  
I have no time for  
friends, family, or hobbies  
What's the point of school  
if I'm only learning

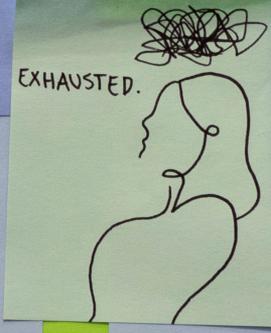
I Don't remember  
anything outside of  
school. It's the  
only thing in my  
life.

Everything is foggy  
and seems like a blur

i feel like i'm  
failing at life

SHOWING  
UP TO  
SCHOOL IS  
AN  
ACCOMPLISHMENT

It is hard to get  
out of bed in the  
mornings.



I know I  
should, but I  
can't find it  
in myself to  
care about much  
of anything  
anymore.

At this point I  
am solely trying to  
get by. When I get  
home, I drop my back  
pack at the door and  
don't pick it up until  
leaving for school the next day

very little  
motivation to  
get out of bed.

COLLAPSE  
COLLAPSE  
COLLAPSE

Coffee.

Burnout = Stress  
because you still  
want to succeed,  
but have no motivation

I stopped trying  
homework, be  
there was to much

Always  
have work  
to do

Endless

After school, i'm so tired  
that I don't want to do  
any work or talk to  
anyone for a week.

lack of energy

Drowning

When everything is passing  
by too quickly and you can't  
do everything you have to do &  
you're running out of time

Put very minimal  
effort in assignments

I use up so  
energy at school  
with all the  
that happens, t  
I get home

Exhausted

I feel mentally  
and emotionally  
exhausted

I feel very overwhelmed  
& there is an immense  
amount of pressure to  
succeed in everything

- Anxiety attacks
- exhaustion
- no motivation
- SENIORITIS

