

Exam Report

October 2023

The Multi-Schools Council | Pupil’s voices across Essex

**Background**

During the MSC meetings in Essex (North, Mid, South, West, and Uttlesford) in 2023, young people were asked, "Exams: general thoughts?" According to research, 15% of GCSE pupils may be classified as "highly test anxious" in 2019. These students experience such high levels of stress and worry that it may have a detrimental effect on their wellbeing and exam performance. In addition, recent research indicates that during exam season, more than 75% of kids have symptoms of anxiety or receive a diagnosis of anxiety. These elements are related to the desire for achievement and top academic standing to pursue a preferred job.

Greater flexibility is desperately needed.

Young people across Essex have expressed their thoughts and below are recommendations that they have made about their thoughts and how the system can be changed.

**Recommendations**

* To have movement breaks, and this is important because the aim of it is to help create the level of alertness which enables a CYP to focus and concentrate.
* To have rest breaks, and this is important because by taking regularly breaks, it can boost a CYP performance.
* They are worried about not getting things correct, so how can we ensure that we are reassuring them that it’s okay to make mistakes and all they can do is try their best?
* Their thoughts about the exams are that it’s too difficult.
* Having calming music would help because it can help the CYP to regulate their emotions and to provide a much-needed break from overstimulation.
* To learn abut different types of relaxation techniques, and it proves that a relaxed CPY can think more constructively and positively.
* Exams to be differentiated to meet the needs of the students. To tailor your teaching to the diverse needs of your students and help them achieve the full potential.
* Support should be normalised, and to ensure that they are not being singled out.
* The time limit is not enough, how can we ensure that they are completing their work to the best of the standards?
* Some CYP felt like that it does help them to prepare for the future.
* How can we support those who gets stressed, especially if stress makes them forget the content of the exams?
* More support needed for those with mental health and disabilities before, during and after.
* Some feel they could benefit from having more practice.

**Conclusion**

Report from 2019, based on students who are experiencing exam stress explains what it’s like to experience it:

*J shares the experience that stress around exams is not confined to the exam itself, or to revision. She explains that she sees the stress as starting early and being everywhere. “You start to feel it as soon as you’re in Year 10 kind of- maybe before actually… And then in Year 11 it’s everywhere. Everyone’s stressing.”*

*Being extremely stressed can make the situation seem hopeless and success in their exams seem impossible.*

*For J, it is uncertainty around the exam itself which is a source of stress. “You don’t know what it’s actually like,”*

Professionals should pay close attention to all these issues. By assisting the CYP in hearing what they have to say, you may start to comprehend how to encourage and empower them to help themselves.

Change begins here, and change begins with you. We want to be able to applaud the report's progress rather than express concern about the lack of interaction. While they may be tiny steps for your organisation, they could lead to tremendous changes for an entire generation.

The Multi-Schools Council Exam’s Report,

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