REGENERON WESEF 2019
The Westchester Science & Engineering Fair

Finalist: **Caitlin O'Donnell**

School: **Yorktown High School**

Title: **Students Overcoming Stress (S.O.S.): Gaining Insight and Addressing Student Stress: Analyzing the Different Modalities of Stress and Mindfulness in Adolescents**

Abstract:

Stress has become an epidemic in modern day America, manifesting itself as crippling panic and anxiety most predominantly in younger generations. 80 percent of adolescents with diagnosable anxiety and 60 percent with diagnosable depression are not actively receiving treatment (Child Mind Institute Children's Mental Health Report, 2015). Stress severely impedes academic performance in students (Mallow, 2006) in addition to hindering overall focus and motivation. The present study focused on identifying the different sources of stress in both high school and college students while simultaneously gaining insight into the adolescent understanding of mindful practice. An anonymous, online, exploratory survey was created and distributed to hundreds of high schools, universities, colleges, and adolescent mindfulness groups across the United States to address the gap in previous research. These groups were contacted via phone or email to receive consent and the link to the questionnaire. The survey received nearly 275 responses over the course of about 1 month. Results from the online survey showed that age, gender, location, and family dynamic correlate with stress type. Moreover, there were significant positive correlations between schools who have mindfulness programs and students who manage stress effectively and regularly. In addition, later statistical analysis found that age correlates with desire to participate in, and prioritize mindfulness and safe, effective stress reduction techniques. Further research is needed to assess commonalities from adolescents in other nations in order to determine if the results have similar positive trends in different cultural environments, or lead to other suggested stress behaviors, stressors, stress reduction methods or mindfulness involvement.