

# When college preparation goes too far

[Business](#)



In 1984, L. Robert Kohls wrote that valuing the future and the improvements Americans are sure the future will bring means that they devalue that past and are, to a large extent, unconscious of the present.

Even a happy present goes largely unnoticed because, happy as it may be, Americans have traditionally been hopeful that the future would bring even greater happiness. Almost all energy is directed toward realizing that better future. At best, the present condition is seen as preparatory to a latter and greater event, which will eventually culminate in something even more worthwhile. (Kohls) In the quote above, Kohls was describing the American value of future orientation. I agree with Kohls' observation of American society. Future orientation is an American value.

It was in 1984 and now, in 2011, Americans still have their minds set on the future. This American value is especially apparent in educational and extra-curricular preparation for college, which starts before a child is even born. Americans take this focus on the future too far. American children are under a lot of stress and pressure, which can lead to depression, and in many cases, suicide. In America, college preparation starts in the womb.

Soon-to-be parents get their future children on pre-school waiting lists before they're even born. Pre-school doesn't even start until children are three years old. Since Americans cannot wait for their children to be born before they sign them up for pre-school, it's illogical to think that they can wait three years for their children to receive any form of education. In one specific case, documented by Marjorie Coeyman Staff, a Ms. Curwin enrolled her daughter, Bridget, in a foreign language class when she was eight-months-

old. This future oriented mother is proud to say that “ today, at 22 months, Bridget joyously calls out “ Oiseau!” every time she sees a bird.

” (Staff) Future preparation is being thrust upon poor Bridget by her mother before she is even able to say “ no”, or in this case, “ non”. Parents aren’t the only ones at fault for the strenuous pre-education of under school-aged children. The government is also active in preparing young Americans for the future. Under the Bush administration, “ all 500, 000 4-year-olds enrolled in Head Start will be given standardized tests.” (Staff) Since pre-schools have higher standards, pre-pre-school education is needed. All of this prep work is to lead children into kindergarten and the rest of elementary school.

I agree with Marjorie when she says that “ part of the tragedy of this is that the stakes become very high very early in children’s lives.” (Staff) With the pressure of foreign language class, pre-school prep, and standardized tests weighing these youngsters down, it’s no wonder that “ pre-schoolers are the fastest-growing market for antidepressants.” (Murray and Fortinberry) Studies show that the number of pre-schoolers who are clinically depressed reaches over a million. “ Depression—and even thoughts of suicide—are as likely to affect toddlers and adolescents as they are adults.” (Murray and Fortinberry) Giving kids antidepressants may be the common fix, but it is not the solution.

Toddlers don’t need pills. What they need is for Americans to start focusing on the present. When children reach age five they go off to kindergarten, which went from a half-day operation to a full-day deal. Still, parents feel that their children are not being instructed enough. Marjorie Coeyman Staff

interviewed a Ms. Weng, learning that Weng's " 6-year-old daughter, Rebecca, spends time on extra math instruction every day, in addition to piano and Chinese lessons and regular homework.

" (Staff) Rebecca does these extra-curricular activities not because she wants to, but because her mother wants her to. Rebecca says that " She's not so happy, because it takes her TV time and her free time." (Staff) The children of today are losing their childhoods. Their parents are taking it from them. Kids focus on the present, wanting TV time and free time.

Adults are the ones that exhibit the American value of future orientation. Sadly, children are sponges. They learn from example, so when this value is pushed on them while they're young, they absorb it and grow up exhibiting the same behavior as their parents. Perhaps, I have judged parents too harshly. They are not fully at blame here.

After all, they are instructed to prepare their children for college, starting while they're young. The magazine article in *Essence* titled " How to Prep Your Kid For College", is just one of the many sources where outside forces put pressure on parents to put pressure on their kids. The aforementioned article gives advice to parents such as, save important files that track your children's achievements and hire a tutor if your child struggles in a subject. It also suggests that success during the school year is not enough. Parents should send their kids off to summer camps. (Anonymous) Due in part by these tips, the child's future becomes the parent's obsession.

Parents feel that they must provide the very best for their children. Sending them to school is not enough. They need to go to tutoring after school and <https://assignbuster.com/when-college-preparation-goes-too-far/>

on the weekends. They absolutely have to give up their summer for all the enrichment summer camp will provide. What parents are actually doing is treating the present as if it were only meant to be used as preparation for the future, which is not what their kids need. After elementary school, children start middle school, or essentially, preparation for high school.

In eighth grade, pre-AP classes arise. These high school classes in middle school are a result of politicians preparing American youth for their future. “ In one of his final acts, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush signed a new law requiring middle school to offer at least one high school level course. Even more novel, the new law also requires eighth-graders to choose a “ major”, or intended career.

” (Flannery) A common high school level class taken by eighth-graders is Algebra. Middle-schoolers struggle with algebra, however, because they are not ready for such a difficult concept. “ Children begin to think abstractly (a must-have skill for algebra) sometime between 12 and adulthood. (Piaget) By eighth grade, some are there.

Some aren't.” (Flannery) Americans' focus on the future is taking their attention away from the present. “ SAT tutors talk of students as young as 13 bursting into tears because of the pressure to get into a good college.” (Staff) Children are suffering in school because of an American value that does not need to be in place. Yes, these kids deserve a great future, but don't they also deserve a happy present? Think about this, “ Just a few years ago, they were writing letters to Santa Clause; in a few more years, they'll be writing to college admissions officers.

” (Flannery) Doesn’t that just sound absurd? Children are being forced to grow up too fast. It’s the classic case of ‘ 13 going on 30’. Present-day American children truly are losing their childhoods. We need to give it back to them. In high school the pressure facing students is virtually insurmountable.

Most of this pressure is built up by the AP program, which “ was raised significantly in 2006, when President Bush singled it out in his State of the Union address as an important mechanism for reinvigorating the growth of the U. S. science and technology workforce (National Science Board 2008).” (Tai) Bush intended the AP program to bring more high school graduates into the “ science pipeline.” More people in the STEM workforce is good for the U. S. economy. The expansion of STEM started in eighth-grade with pre-AP classes. These classes were to prepare students for AP classes in the high school, which should be taken during sophomore or junior year to appear on college transcripts. Since high AP test scores can be accepted by colleges as replacement to college classes, it is possible for a high school student to gain “ second-year (sophomore) status before even setting foot on a college campus.” (Tai) In this way, the AP program is beneficial to high school students by allowing them to move ahead faster and cheaper than other kids.

(Tai) It is also supposed to be beneficial to colleges by having incoming students already familiar with the workings of a college level classroom. The students share in this benefactor by being ready to step into a college class and have a path set, with a major in mind. This is all speaking theoretically,

however. In reality, high school students are not all ready to make such a big decision, like picking a major (nor were they back in the eighth grade.) Also, AP classes are not really modeled like college classes.

Therefore, it may be wise for AP students to still take the equivalent college courses. In that case, they'd be paying double for their college education. The benefits of the AP program are only present in certain ideal situations, but life rarely presents the majority with such circumstances. The final step in college preparation is early admission. There are three early choice plans for college. They are early action, early decision, and restrictive early action.

These plans make it possible for students to apply early for their first-choice college. (Venegas) So, after spending their whole lives preparing for college, once these students are close to making it, they still need to prepare in advance to get a spot. Students taking advantage of early decision programs have had a portfolio prepared well before their senior year of high school. (Venegas) For 30 years, Harvard has had an early admission policy.

Harvard has, however, dropped its early admission policy and so has Princeton, another ivy-league college. (Venegas) I think that dropping these policies is best. It gives the colleges more diversity because they will not only admit super-prepared future oriented kids. They will accumulate a wider range of present affiliated students as well. Kids will be less stressed if they have ample time to get ready for college.

All the stress that comes from this future preparation takes its toll. After eighteen years of being pushed to do better and get good grades to get into a good college some kids snap. The depression that started when they were  
<https://assignbuster.com/when-college-preparation-goes-too-far/>

young hasn't gone away. Studies show that " 15 % of depressed people will commit suicide." (Murray and Fortinberry) Cornell, a college in New York, knows just what I'm talking about, earning the nickname of the " suicide school".

Cornell has several gorges, hot spots for suicides. Depressed students jump to their death from the bridges down to the gorges. " The university has stationed police officers and security guards on all of the bridges that cross Cornell's gorges, and extended the hours of several campus counseling options." (Epstein), their solution to the problem. The counseling is "" at least anecdotally ..

. helping people," said Simeon Moss, a university spokesman." (Epstein) The half dozen suicides in 2010 say otherwise. Counseling this late in the game is not the solution. Focus on the present should have started long ago.

Kohl's observations of Americans in 1984 are very similar to what is seen in American society today. Americans look forward to the future. They don't step back and relax to enjoy the present, and they seem to disregard the past as if it never happened. Today is needed to realize that better tomorrow. This American way of thinking is encouraged by the government and parents, teachers, and other adults when it comes to education.

Every stage of a child's life seems to be planned out for them by their parents from conception to college. Then, after seeing this future oriented behavior for say 20 years of their life, they adopt it as their own. So that present associated child wanting TV time, becomes a future oriented drone going from college to career to retirement to the grave. An American ignores <https://assignbuster.com/when-college-preparation-goes-too-far/>



their life, while preparing for their death, which for some may come sooner than others when they take matters into their own hands. This grim reality needs to be realized and corrected, today. Works Cited Anonymous.

“ How to Prep Your Kid for College.” Essence Oct. 2011: n. pag. ProQuest Discovery.

Web. 14 Nov. 2011. ; <http://search.proquest.com/docview/893909542?accountid=34664;>

Epstein, Jennifer. “ Does 6 Deaths In 6 Months Make Cornell A ‘ Suicide School’?” USA Today 16 Mar. 2010: n. pag. USA TODAY. Web.

26 Nov. 2011. ; [http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2010-03-16-IHE-cornell-suicides-16\\_ST\\_N.](http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2010-03-16-IHE-cornell-suicides-16_ST_N.htm)

htm;. Flannery, Mary. “ Advancing THE Middle Ground.” NEA Today [Washington] Feb. 2007: n. pag.

ProQuest Discovery. Web. 14 Nov. 2011. ; <http://search.proquest.com/docview/198882935?accountid=34664;> Kohls, L. Robert. “ The Values Americans Live By.” Apr. 1984.

Values Americans Live By. Web. 1 Dec. 2011. ; [http://www.](http://www.cmc.edu/pages/faculty/alee/extra/American_values.html)

[cmc.edu/pages/faculty/alee/extra/American\\_values.html](http://www.cmc.edu/pages/faculty/alee/extra/American_values.html);. Murray, Bob, PhD, and Alicia Fortinberry, MS. “ Depression Facts and Stats.” Depression Fact Sheet: Depression Statistics and Depression Causes.

uplift program, 15 Jan. 2005. Web. 22 Nov. 2011.

<https://assignbuster.com/when-college-preparation-goes-too-far/>

; [http://www.upliftprogram.com/depression\\_stats.html](http://www.upliftprogram.com/depression_stats.html); Staff, Marjorie Coeyman. “ Childhood Achievement Test.

” The Christian Science Monitor [Boston] 17 Dec. 2002: 11. ProQuest Discovery. Web. 13 Nov.

2011. ; [http://search.proquest.com/docview/405669497/fulltext/1330371B9FB5A952CEB/5?accountid=](http://search.proquest.com/docview/405669497/fulltext/1330371B9FB5A952CEB/5?accountid=34664)

[34664](http://search.proquest.com/docview/405669497/fulltext/1330371B9FB5A952CEB/5?accountid=34664); Tai, Robert. “ Posing Tougher Questions about the Advanced Placement Program.

” Liberal Education Summer 2008: n. pag. ProQuest Discovery. Web. 14 Nov.

2011. ; [http://search.proquest.com/docview/209814161?accountid=](http://search.proquest.com/docview/209814161?accountid=34664)

[34664](http://search.proquest.com/docview/209814161?accountid=34664); Venegas, Kristan. ““ Harvard, Princeton Drop Early Admissions – Should Others Follow?”” Diverse Issues in Higher Education [Fairfax] 2 Nov.

2006: n. pag. ProQuest Discovery. Web. 14 Nov. 2011.

; [http://search.proquest.com/docview/194223753?accountid= 34664](http://search.proquest.com/docview/194223753?accountid=34664);