

Why are students pressured to get good grades?

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Think back to the first day of high school. There has been years of buildup to this day, full of stories of Freshman Friday, the preparation of the academics which are told to be harder than ever, teams coming to the middle schools to recruit more members, class fairs, and all sorts of stories being passed down from friends, older siblings, and even parents. That build up has all led to this one day, this one day that is going to mark the new beginning. Only, for some, the new beginning is going to lead down a road of stress, drugs, cheating, peer pressure, and trying to live up to that expectation that has always been there: bring home those A's.

Students are pushed to extremes during their school years, often times resulting in breakdowns, cheating, use of study-enhancing drugs, however, the main causes for these extremes revolve around the parents of the students, their school, and the society they are exposed. College is an idea planted in their brains at a young age, often with a skewed vision of what it is because of the way it is presented to them while they grow up. Through books, music, movies, and television, children can learn all about the world they are designed to live in, and just how competitive it can be. Children are raised with their parent's expectations following them, always reminding them to make their bed, brush their teeth, do not talk back, pay attention in class, say "excuse me". From birth, those children are told that grades need to be high.

They are told that those grades will make people happy, and will ensure their future. The desire to do whatever it takes to make those good grades is not created in the rough waters of middle school, but rather during the developmental years as a child. When family comes and visits, the

grandparents gather around the table and always ask the embarrassing questions: “ Have you got a boyfriend yet? Oh you’ll be snatching them all up in no time!” But then comes the questions that are not as embarrassing, but equally as necessary: “ How are those grades of yours? Making your grandparents proud? What about the soccer that you did last year?” Who would want to upset their grandparents? Even at this young age, grades are associated with pride, and an occasional lollipop when family comes to visit. Not only are the grandparents and parents pressuring them, but the older siblings can have the same effect. Being compared to the older sister or brother is something that happens to every younger child.

It can be harmless, with the Legocity they built compared to the other one, or it can be damaging to the psyche as they progress through school, standing forever in the shadow of them. It is hard to be “ yourself” in high school while all the teachers know them from previous grades with the older siblings (“ Pressures to Get Good Grades”). Parents often raise their kids to make up for what they messed up on in their childhood. For example, a mother never made it onto the cheer team, so their daughter will be sure to make her proud and make it to the top of pyramid. The father never passed with above B’s or C’s, “ be sure to bring home that ACADECA trophy!” Not only is it the desire to make up for their own failures, but also to prevent the children from making those same mistakes.

As the children grow older, they are given speeches of how to avoid drugs, how to not be afraid on that first day, how to make friends, and how not to offend teachers. Joining clubs looks excellent on college applications. The idea is planted in their brains as a child, that they need to excel in order to

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be worth anything. Parents feel like they have a responsibility to make sure their children get good grades, so they can often resort to threats or bribery. It can range anywhere from pulling their children out of clubs, or promising money for straight A's. These ideas of rewards, and the fear of punishment can propel them into maintaining a good grade point and staying in those clubs.

Another example would be the fear associated with losing control over electronics, such as phones, gaming systems, and computers. So much of the society is heavily based on electronics, the promise of either losing or gaining the means to participate in the society can change the attitude towards school, and the grade they receive. With the idea of self-worth being centered around school work imprinted on us at such a young age, it also opens the door to potential failure. That failure can haunt the student, and can make them afraid of the future that they might live in with the less-than-adequate grades. Generally what fuels this line of thought is the failures of the parents, the stories from them, the same ones that make the parents push their kids to make better choices than they did.

The pressure can not only be applied by the parents, but also by the kids trying to model themselves with the only comparison being the parents themselves (Palmer). The school itself can provide an equal amount of stress on performance as the parents. Assemblies often feed students the goals of graduating top of the class, making it to the ever so scary and looming title of Valedictorian. Apart from titles like Valedictorian, there are other rewards, such as honor roll, principal's list, and perfect attendance. Those titles are everywhere around the school, being pushed by the morning

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announcements, the teachers, and the assemblies prepping kids for the new year.

Next to the assemblies, the other students can be just as worse. Peer pressure is required for high school, definitely on the checklist for a proper high school experience. That peer pressure that takes place at school can lead to all sorts of bad activities in order to get good grades: cheating, taking study-enhancing drugs, cramming for tests. Being around friends who are in honors and AP classes can result in the feeling to compete for grades, or at least be on the same page as the friends with grades. Students are often pushed to cheat in order to maintain that grade point average.

School has become less about the education itself, and more about getting good grades. Cheating is not the only bad result of peer pressure, there can also be uses of Adderall, a study-enhancing drug. If all the high school students in the harder classes are using this to stay up all night and focus on the test material, then something needs to be done for the competition of other students. This raises the use of Adderall at the school, Adderall being a drug designed for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to help them calm down (but can provide children without ADHD the opposite effect) as it is a psychoactive drug. The competition between the students, and the friends can increase the use of improper material, like the drugs and the cheating (“ Risky Rise of the Good-Grade Pill”).

Something that can fuel the fire between the competing students is the lexicon they have around the school. How often are words such as “ stupid, dork, loser, dumb, nerd” getting thrown around as insults in high school? The

answer is all the time. Those words can carry a horrible meaning, and can ruin someone's day. All the more reason to avoid getting called that at all costs. A way to do that, most teenagers have found, is to change the way they perform at school.

If getting good grades will decrease the chance of being made fun of and being called stupid, then most kids are all for it. There is pressure to get good grades, and change themselves, from the words their peers use, and the way they act. The students who compete for grades are often found on the honors and Advanced Placement (AP) track, which are talked about all throughout the school. These classes are encouraged at the school and the assemblies, with the idea that they will help fuel the way into college. While this may be true, it is also providing students with the idea that college is not an achievable thing without them.

When in the honors classes, there is still an expectation of getting high grades, even though these classes are harder. There is extra stress on higher level classes for those grades, adding to the overall stress of the student. This idea of higher classes being better for everything, is also pushed by the teachers. There are teachers who push kids to doing their best, but who also give them the idea that they will never get to college unless they take certain classes (Palmer). Take a walk down the street, there are billboards advertising the nearest college, there are fliers of upcoming events in that college, there are shirts with the logo on them.

The looming presence of college is everywhere, but it is always portraying it in an air of respectability. The existence of that idea, brings along the idea

that not going to college is not allowed, and has no respect. The high paying jobs are the ones that have years and years of schooling behind them, the jobs with framed pieces of paper to claim the worth of the position. People look down on those who never completed college, it is treated with a sad look and a mumble of disrespect and wasted dreams. With the current economic state, it is even harder to get into college. It is more expensive than it ever has been, it has more competition, and more scholarships to give out to higher-qualifying people.

In order to get scholarships, and to get noticed from colleges, they have to be spectacular, they have to stand out. However, everyone is trying to stand out, and get noticed by those colleges. This pressures students to get good grades so they can be sure to be able to pay for the college they want to go to, and avoid that so called "dead end" way of life. The media (music, television, movies, radio, poetry, and books) that students are exposed to often shows the protagonist (or a lovable character) as being a well-educated individual. These characters are usually shown as archetypes, like the straight A honors student, the biker with the leather jacket, the broken man who wants to fix everything else, the one who never stops running.

All those characters and those ideas are put forward with an air of intelligence to them, influencing the children who absorb it. Media is one of the most influential factors in this society, especially on teenagers. When they connect so well and personally to a character, or a song, that can change their mind about what they want to be, and it can change their perspective on what good qualities are. Often times these characters will give the students a reason to get good grades, so they can be just like the <https://assignbuster.com/why-are-students-pressured-to-get-good-grades/>

girl who saves the world after her chemistry test, or they can be the man driving away from the fear, but knowing why he does it (“ Pressures to Get Good Grades”). Being a student in this society is difficult: times have changed, and school is harder.

Parents interfere by trying to make their children’s grades better. They do not realize just how influencing they can be, raising their kids with the idea of perfection. School can be equally as bad, teaching the children about honors and AP curriculums, and the application process for college. All the while giving them the idea that without those classes, the applications will go to waste. Society can have the same effect on students, spreading the word about the declining economy and the cost of tuition of college.

They make entrance to college a competitive field, the winner with the best grades can get in for as little money as possible. As a student myself, I can say that these fears and concerns have been running through my head for years. I still stay up at night with the thought running through my head, “ have I really done enough yet?”