

## Parental Pressure within High School Students

I. I became interested in this topic because my entire academic life has been filled with pressure from my parents. This pressure was mainly in school and grades, and in high school, the amount of pressure increased dramatically. This is because my parents now realized that everything in high school counts towards college. When I first came to high school, my grades were not as good as they were in middle school. I needed a little time to adapt to high school before I could improve my grades. During this time, my parents became upset because I brought home a report card that was not as good as they were expecting. Then I really noticed the pressure getting higher and higher. I did not only notice this with me, but I noticed this with many of my friends. I heard phrases like "My parents are going to kill me" and "I'm going to be grounded for 10 years" many times so when the opportunity to do research on this came up, I chose this as my subject.

II. How does parental pressure influence students in high school? If there is an influence, is it positive or negative? I would like to do research on this because it raised my curiosity. For me personally, I do better in school if I am calm and have little pressure, but there might be students out there at Ramapo High School that think differently. These are some of the things that I will try to find out through this I-Search.

III. At the beginning of my search, I had a really hard time finding secondary sources. First, I went to the school library. Since the school library has this computer program called BELS, there was no need to go to the other libraries. BELS is a program that lists all the books in Franklin Lakes, Wyckoff, and Oakland. It is a network that unites the two public libraries and the one in Indian Hills. I then went to an article search. I had no luck here either. When I went home, I went on America Online to try to find some articles or any secondary sources. I went to the article search and still found nothing. After a few days, I asked the school librarian to help me find some books. She guided me to a section that had books about social problems. Luckily, I found two books on families and parents. These were two good books, but I still needed at least one more to fulfill my requirement. I went to the Special Services department and talked to a person there. She gladly offered help. She said that she would look through her stuff and try to find what she could on this subject. Then she told me to come back after school to pick up whatever she had. I returned after the school day ended and went back to the Special Services department. She was waiting there with two books and an article. Although I found that one of the books that I was given was not a real good help, the others were. My secondary sources were finished and now I had to move on to my primary sources. These were much easier because I did not need to search for anything. I interviewed two classmates during some free time I had in class, and put out a survey. These also helped a lot in giving me information I could use. Since I had all of my sources, I then proceeded with the notecards.

IV. Do parents of high school students put too much pressure on their children? The students would probably say yes, and the parents would probably say no. Parents would probably say that they just want the best for their children. Sometimes, though, this "good cause" leads into disaster when the parents take it too far. This could be by the fault of the parent or the child. This means that either the child provokes the parent by doing badly in school, or the parents do not become satisfied with the child's achievement and takes over their lives.

When the parents concentrate on grades alone, they become like a dictator and not a friend. They do not care about anything else such as social problems and sports (Webb pg.24). This causes the child to overachieve. This means that the

child thinks that the only way he/she can get the affection and respect of his/her parents is to bring home good grades. At this point, anything that does not deal with grades or academics is worthless to the child, and furthermore the child does not care (Webb pg.25). When this happens, the child focuses so much on grades, he/she misses out on being a normal teenager. This includes going out with friends, dances, hobbies, and sports. Also, the child feels lonely and ends up having to practice growing up and being an adult by herself because his/her parents do not care (Webb pg.26). Sometimes parents get so caught up with their child's grades that they always "check over" their homework when all they are doing is doing it for them. The teachers notice this and punish the student and not the parent (Gaillard). Klagsbrun(1976) states, "Suicidal students are seldom satisfied with their grades, no matter how high they are."

Parents can also put pressure on their child even when praising their good grades and efforts. For example, when a child does extremely well in one subject, the parents become happy and praise the child. At the same time, the child is doing poorly in another subject but is just afraid to tell his/her parents because it might make them upset. This pressures the child and he/she does not know what to do (Rubin pg.143).

Pressure can also be deadly. Here are two cases. First, a fifteen year old honors student (and an Eagle Scout) stood up in the middle of his English class and shot himself. He did this because he was given a notice, that was to be signed by his parents, saying that he was doing badly in class (Guetzloe pg.65). The second case is another teenage suicide. A ten year old boy received bad grades on his report card for the third time. He left his report card at school knowing that if he brought it home he would be punished. When he went home, without his report card, his father got suspicious. He went to the school to pick it up, and in the half hour that he was gone, the little boy shot himself. His brother remembered him saying that he could not stand the idea of a whipping (Guetzloe pg.63). There have been many more suicide incidents and Seiden (1966) suggested that "increasing pressure for academic achievement would lead to an increase in suicide rate among the student population" (Guetzloe pg.65).

In a recent survey of sophomores in Ramapo High School, more than half stated that they had a lot of pressure relating to school. Some came from parents and some came from themselves. A person answering this survey stated, "Most of my pressure about grades and school and college comes from myself. Last year, the pressure was so bad that I made myself sick." According to Garfinkel, 3 of 10 leading causes of stress in adolescents are school related and 1 of 10 suicide attempts is related to a crises at school (Guetzloe pg.64). Also, in this survey, 15 of 43 students have siblings that do better in school than they do, and 10 of those students have parents expecting them to do as well as his/her sibling.

Kelly Leaman and Tyler Mills were both interviewed and both students stated that they have families that do extremely well in school. Kelly states, "My whole family is smart, and they all go (or went) to good colleges." In the issue of pressure affecting their school performance, Tyler said that he has a good amount of pressure and that without it, he would probably do worse. Kelly on the other hand, said that she would do a lot better if she had less pressure from her parents.

Being a good parent means being there and having confidence in a child. A parent should provide outstretched arms for a safe place when the child might need it. The child should be relaxed and should be enjoying school. Maybe the child will get good grades because he/she wants to (Webb pg.25).

Works Cited

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