# Middle school's "cool kids" may stumble afterward

**Group Green**



In this April 18, 2014, photo, Annette Wells (right) leads a discussion in her seventh-eighth grade language arts class at Komachin Middle School in Lacey, Washington. Photo: AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

When they grow up, the meek kids from middle school will come out on top. Or, at least, they’ll live healthier and more productive lives than the "cool" kids will.

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as*

*I read:*

A new study looked at 13-year-olds who engaged in “pseudomature” behavior — such as minor shoplifting and early romantic relationships — and were seen as the “cool kids.” It found that they tended to develop problems with drugs and relationships by their early 20s.

The study, published on Thursday, tracked nearly 200 13-year-olds for 10 years. Among the factors considered were how much students valued their popularity, how important appearance was in seeking out friends, and if students used drugs or had romantic relationships.

The researchers found that young teens who acted old for their age by sneaking into movies, forming early romantic relationships, shoplifting and basing friendships on appearance were seen by peers as popular. But as these “pseudomature” teens matured, their behavior was no longer linked with popularity.

Instead, they were thought to be less socially competent by their peers and had more problems with substance abuse, said Joseph Allen, who led the study.

**Fast Track To Not Very Much**

Allen said the average “cool” teen, by age 22, compared poorly with the average teen in the study. They had a 45 percent greater rate of problems due to substance use and a 22 percent greater rate of criminal behavior.

Teens are impressed by these kids, and parents are impressed too "because they think that these pseudomature kids are on the fast track,” Allen said. “These kids are on the fast track, but it’s really to a dead end."

He added, “They are gaining the appearance of maturity, but they are not gaining actual maturity.”

Researchers suggest that these kids are failing to develop important life skills. They spend so much time trying to seem cool, they don’t develop the skills needed for meaningful friendships.

The study followed 86 male and 98 female middle school students for a 10-year period beginning in 1998. There were some surprises, Allen said.

In particular, the study notes that “pseudomature” behavior was actually a better predictor of future substance abuse than drug and alcohol use in middle school.

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as*

*I read:*

**The Quiet Majority Will Surprise**

Researchers are still following the students — now in their mid- to late 20s — to see how they fare later in life.

Parents shouldn’t worry too much if their young teens prefer to spend Saturday nights at home watching a movie or reading instead of going out with friends, Allen said.

“There is this kind of quiet majority of adolescents out there that is much more functional at an older age,” he said.

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. According to the article, what is the MOST probable reason for kids engaging in "pseudomature" behavior?

A. They want to develop romantic relationships.

B. They want to impress their parents.

C. They want to engage in drugs.

D. They want to gain popularity.

2. Which of the following supports the central idea of the article?

A. Among the factors considered were how much students valued their popularity, how important appearance was in seeking out friends and if students used drugs or had romantic relationships.

B. It found that they tended to develop problems with drugs and relationships by their early 20s.

C. Teens are impressed by these kids, and parents are impressed too "because they think that these pseudomature kids are on the fast track," Allen said.

D. Parents shouldn't worry too much if their young teens prefer to spend Saturday nights at home watching a movie or reading instead of going out with friends, Allen said.

3. Read the sentence from the article.

When they grow up, the meek kids from middle school shall inherit the Earth.

What is the synonym for the word "meek" as used in the above sentence?

1. Docile
2. Brave
3. Patient
4. Tolerant

4. Select the sentence that contains a word that is a synonym for "perform."

A. Or, at least, they'll live healthier and more productive lives than the "cool" kids will.

B. But as these "pseudomature" teens matured, their behavior was no longer linked with popularity.

C. In particular, the study notes that "pseudomature" behavior was actually a better predictor of future substance abuse than drug and alcohol use in middle school.

D. Researchers are still following the students — now in their mid- to late 20s — to see how they fare later in life.