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

**Group Pink**



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 quiet kids from middle school will rule the world. 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 acted older than other kids their age — by doing things like dating or shoplifting. These were often seen as the “cool kids.”

The study found that these cool kids tended to develop problems with drugs and relationships by their early 20s.

Nearly 200 13-year-olds were tracked in the study for 10 years. A variety of behaviors were considered. Among them were how much students valued their popularity, how important appearance was in seeking out friends and if students used drugs or dated.

**Popularity Doesn't Equal Social Skills**

The researchers found that young teens who acted old for their age by doing such things as dating or shoplifting were considered popular. But as these “pseudomature” teens matured, things changed: Their behavior was no longer linked with popularity.

Instead, they were thought to be less socially skilled than others their age, said Joseph Allen, who led the study. They also had more problems with drugs and alcohol.

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 drugs and alcohol. They also had a 22 percent greater rate of criminal behavior.

Teens are impressed by these kids. 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," he said, "but it’s really to a dead end."

He added, “They are gaining the appearance of maturity." But they are not gaining real 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.

**It's Actually Cooler To Be Uncool**

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.

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*I read:*

In particular, it turns out that the sort of older behavior involved with dating early or minor theft is an excellent predictor of future drug and alcohol abuse. In fact, it is a better predictor than drug and alcohol use in middle school.

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

One conclusion of the study will be welcome: Parents shouldn’t worry too much if their young teens don't seem that popular. If a kid prefers to spend Saturday nights at home watching a movie or reading instead of going out with friends, Allen said, there's no need for concern.

Many "uncool" teenagers, he said, do much better later on than the popular kids do.

**Comprehension Questions:**

1. Which of the following is MOST important to include in a summary of the article?

A. A new study looked at 13-year-olds who acted older than other kids their age — by doing things like dating or shoplifting.

B. The study found that these cool kids tended to develop problems with drugs and relationships by their early 20s.

C. Teens are impressed by these kids, Allen said.

D. The study followed 86 male and 98 female middle school students for a 10-year period beginning in 1998.

2. Which of the following DOES NOT support the main idea of the article?

A. The researchers found that young teens who acted old for their age by doing such things as dating or shoplifting were considered popular.

B. "These kids are on the fast track," he said, "but it's really to a dead end."

C. Researchers suggest that these kids are failing to develop important life skills.

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

3. Select the sentence that contains a word that is a synonym for "fruitful."

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

B. The researchers found that young teens who acted old for their age by doing such things as dating or shoplifting were considered popular.

C. Researchers suggest that these kids are failing to develop important life skills.

D. In fact, it is a better predictor than drug and alcohol use in middle school.

4. Select the sentence that contains a word that means the opposite of "disappointed."

A. When they grow up, the quiet kids from middle school will rule the world.

B. Among them were how much students valued their popularity, how important appearance was in seeking out friends and if students used drugs or dated.

C. They had a 45 percent greater rate of problems due to drugs and alcohol.

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