

1. T H
 2. P R E S S
 3. O
 4. E D U C

As stress of school increases, some turn to substance

Bernice Gajda
Associate Editor

You are only worth your GPA. Despite all the conditioning of individuality and importance, some students cannot shake this mindset. As 12th in the top ranked public high schools in Michigan, we Okemos students are all too familiar with academic pressure. To keep up with a growing expectation for excellence, some students turn

to substance abuse as a last ditch effort to keep their heads above water. In more recent years, the “student’s little helper” in peoples’ back pocket is Adderall, a stimulant used to treat ADHD. The drug aids in attention and motivation, thus being so popular amongst students as a study aid. However, this particular drug and its growing influence among teenagers holds a dark side of much complexity.

First of all, the effects on a user’s body are significant. According to RxList.com effects include increased heart rate, intense focus and a sense of blind euphoria set in. Hours later, users crash. Withdrawal side effects consist of insomnia, anxiety and extreme irritability. The adderall high can be addictive, and upon taking too much can also be fatal. The nasty comedowns and possibility of overdose are certainly shocking,

but the reasons for abuse amongst teenagers should be just as alarming. There is simply too much pressure on high schoolers. The American system of education is deeply flawed. Instead of putting an emphasis on actual learning, students are graded on regurgitation of facts and an obsession over points. Points determine a grade, grades determine GPA, GPA determines acceptance into college and college

Opinion

Elite ranking comes at a steep cost

Andrew Graham
Campus Editor

Recently a statewide survey by the U.S News and World Report ranked Okemos High School as the twelfth best public school in the state of Michigan. Okemos has frequently been featured near the top on polls of Michigan’s 850 public schools. Okemos produces some of the most college-ready alumni in the country, but molding such prepared graduates is a double-edged sword. Traditionally the idea is that the more educated you are, the more money you make, the better the life you live and so on. That is all fine and dandy and generally pretty true, but we need to escape the culture that forces that notion on students. An education is only as valuable as the person who receives it. If the whole process of educating someone leads to depression, anxiety, sleepless nights and general apathy, something is clearly wrong with the process. The culture we live in both in Okemos and as a nation too heavily focuses on high GPAs and ACT scores and not nearly enough on a student’s well being. The underlying problem driving all this is the college admissions process. When my parents applied to college

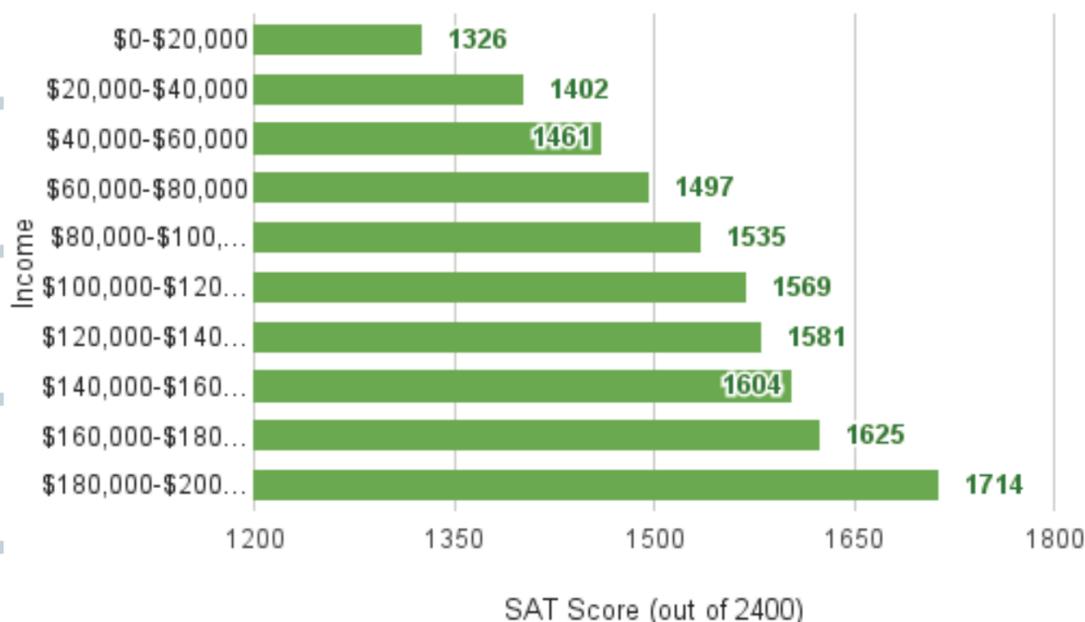
in the eighties, they submitted their transcripts, an ACT score and a few essays. Throw in a recommendation letter for good measure. Today, you need to have a 4.0 GPA with seven APs, 1000 volunteer hours, run a non profit benefiting GMO-free, gluten intolerant children of Brazilian guava farmers and have served as a junior ambassador at the United Nations. Students are stuck between killing themselves with four years of grueling work just to have four or more years of grueling hard work or of for years. They subject themselves to academic hell to get to the other side, and the grass may not be any greener. The scariest part of it all is that change might not really be possible. To get to a place where APs and GPA take a backseat to actual skills and abilities, college admission boards need to value skills and abilities over something north of a 30 on the ACT and a high GPA. Some colleges are ahead of the curve and do not even accept APs for class credit. That would be a tectonic shift from the current paradigm of college admissions. Even with that in mind, it still is not worth it to put all your effort towards getting into some prestigious four year university if you will be burnt out and sick of school by the time you get there. Again, an education is only as valuable as the person who has it. If getting to “the promised land” makes you depressed and tired and questioning the meaning of everything, it is not worth it. Students need to be encouraged to follow their passions and enjoy what they do, while also being pushed to receive a quality education. School is important and it always should be, but we as a society need to value the wellbeing of our students above their ACT scores and Ivy League acceptances.

High school

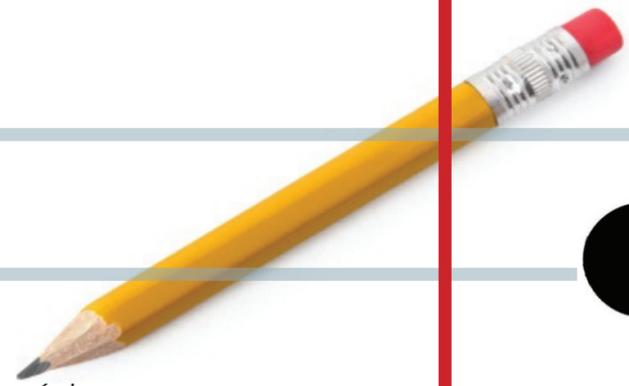
Charlie Ciuk
Staff Reporter

After four years of high school it is understandable to be burnt out. The joy and relief felt by students on the first day of summer is a good indicator of how the academic year may be. Students young and old pour out of their educational institutions with smiles from exhaustion as they bask in their newfound freedom. They dream about the ability to do both nothing and everything, all at once. Many students feel pressure to succeed during their time in the halls of Okemos High School. This is not news. OHS is currently the 12th best school in the state according to recent ranking. However, many students are surprised by the statistic of school’s “culture of excellence” as the norm.

Average SAT Scores by Family Income (2013)

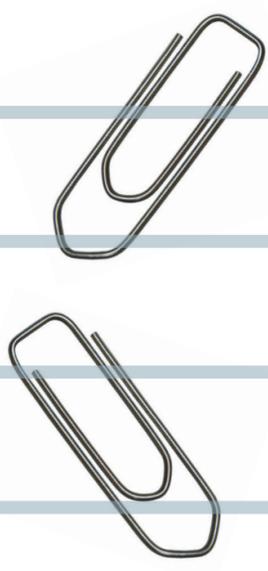


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nces to cope

is a career; a future.
You are only worth your GPA to the American education system. Many students have the ability to cope with healthy mechanisms, but for a significant percentage, the pressure pushes them to drugs. Education should be an exploration of passion, to make us all successful human beings. Learning is not basing a future on points and standardized tests.



Staffer lists cons of standardized tests

Julian Fedorchuk
Staff Reporter

Standardized tests are the bane of high schoolers' and teachers' existence, and with good reason. A good deal of our entire future is based off the scores we earn, from what colleges will accept you to what you will major in. However, there are massive problems with the standardized test culture of our country.

ment for testing that would almost never occur in the "real world" that they are supposed to be preparing students for. In the workplace, there will almost always be internet access, cell phones, computers, calculators and so on. If there are none of those, there would at least be other people that could be talked to in order to ask questions.

With all of these resources taken away for the test, there is a completely unrealistic atmosphere that exists for no reason whatsoever. Yet, these tests are the gateway into college, and the gateway into jobs, where memorizing facts, equations and dates will have absolutely nothing to do with anything in work. If any of those facts, equations and dates are actually needed, then they can just be looked up online.

It is well know that everyone is different and has their own learning techniques. This is even heavily emphasised in our schooling. When everyone is then given the same test, these differences are not taken into account.

"I think they succeed in covering a large range of topics, but I think in my opinion the biggest flaw is that they don't test you on the knowledge," Eashwar Mohan (11) said. "They test you on your ability to interpret strange questions."

Some people do not even plan on doing anything related to what is on the test with their life, but still have to go through it anyways. Some students may plan on being a photographer, so why should a bad grade on the math part of a test have anything to do with whether or not they can succeed in a learning environment?

Everyone handles stress differently. Some people work better under stress, others simply can not function. The stress that tests like the SAT give to students is enormous, as for many it is most important part at getting into college.

The standardized tests that every high schooler has to take have massive flaws, and are not truly representative of intelligence or abilities.

I ranking places students under pressure

Senior Marshall Basson spent three years at Okemos High School before moving to Grand Forks, North Dakota. "It is much easier to maintain a high GPA here. I have so little to do that it actually makes my senioritis even worse," Basson said.

Okemos students face a tough curriculum and stiff competition from their classmates. "In my experience, stress definitely helped me throughout high school," Daniel Kim (12) said. "Without it, I wouldn't have tried nearly as hard academically."

The stresses of Okemos High School pushed Kim to great academic accomplishment as he will be attending Cornell University in the fall.

He is one of four Okemos students that will be attending an Ivy League institution.

Despite great peaks of success, pressure to succeed can cause mental distress in students as well.

Lowering college admission rates and the strive for higher

standardized test scores are only a couple of stresses placed on students in a place like Okemos.

When paired with the already confusing process of growing up, the combination can be a real pain for many.

"The competitive, cut-throat nature of our school definitely contributes to [academic burnout] because the environment places a lot of stress on kids and can mentally drain them," Mari Hernandez (12) said.

Mari is no slacker either, as she will be attending Northwestern. The stresses to not only succeed, but to thrive, affect high-achieving students as well as low-achieving students.

Leaving some students left thinking that an A- is what left them short of their goals.

"I'm really excited to continue the next chapter of my life and leave the high school. I am also really excited to see what other people in our class end up doing," Emily Keefe (12) said.



Percentage of High School Adderall Users

