

# UNDERAGE PAGE

## LAST CHANCE TO SPEAK UP

• Thursday, May 28, will be the last UnderAge Page before the summer break. Submit your articles and photos to:

telegramteens@yahoo.com



## Local teen's opinion on the state of American education

BY SARAH LAIRMORE  
BELTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Studies and the signs all around us show that America's children may be actually getting more stupid as the years go by. Tests

### Opinion

and textbooks are being dumbed down or simplified across the nation to match the falling intelligence level!

This leaves potentially spectacular minds behind. How can we sit and watch the most valuable and powerful thing we have go to waste? In the words of someone much wiser than I, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste!"

### Your child's education

Our education as American children is losing quality, insight and intelligence. In truth, other major world countries are passing us in the now frantic race to the finish line of brain power. America finds itself trying to keep up with China's techniques. Chinese children set the pace for other countries. This recent dumbing down is affecting our nation's children and as a result their rate of success in the real world.

### Effects

The effects of this tragic decline may not be realized now, but this concern is slowly but steadily injuring our home. Nothing is safe from the nationwide dumb-down. Warning labels, instruction packets, and brochures are all losing the subtle jokes, humor and insight because the majority of

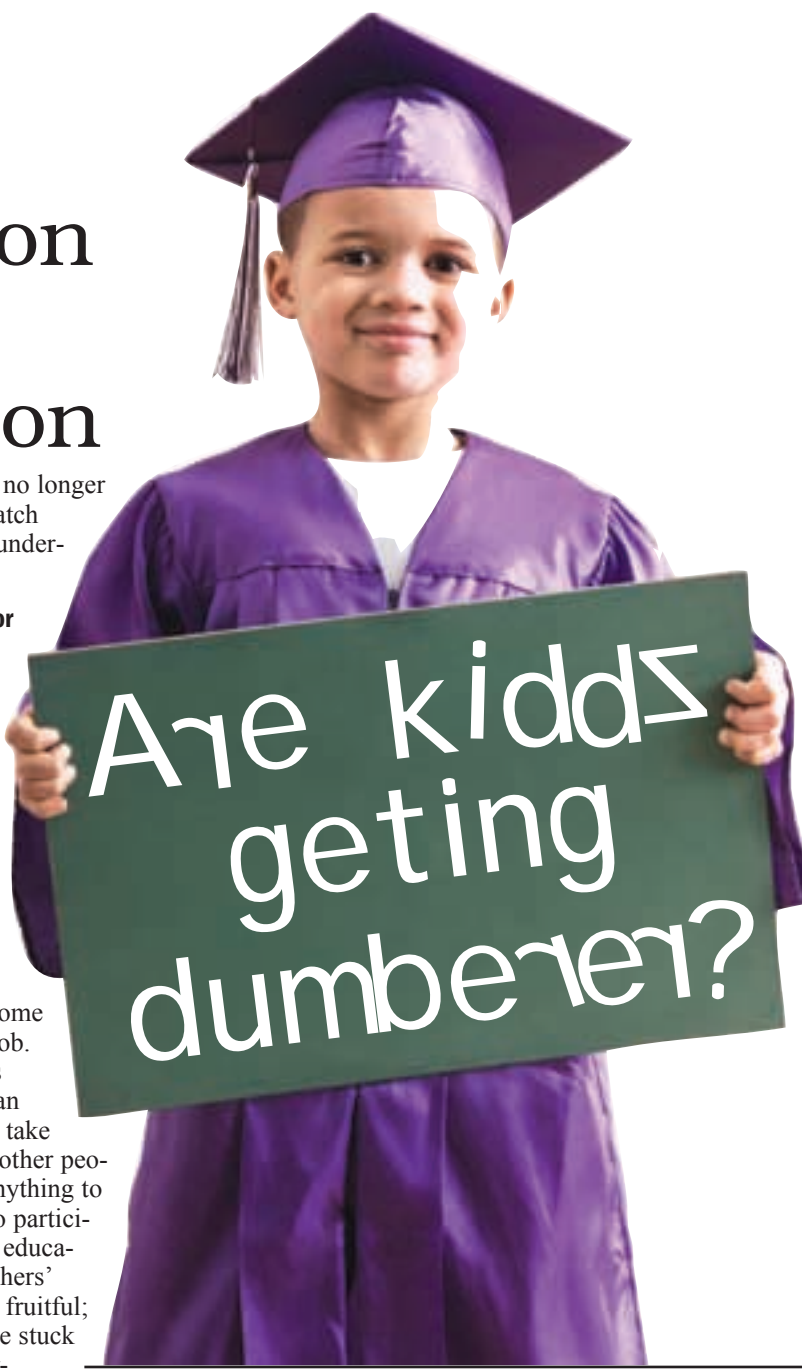
our population is no longer alert enough to catch them, much less understand them.

### What you can do for yourself

If you do not find the thought of a perpetual brain blink particularly inviting — do something about it. Don't just plant yourself in school every day and become a vegetable. Don't become an educational blob. Your education is more precious than you think; do not take for granted what other people would give anything to have. You have to participate in your own education for your teachers' hard efforts to be fruitful; otherwise, you are stuck in a cycle of ever-so-slowly moving average education. Study, read, CARE — do anything and everything you can to take your education into your own hands.

### Parents: What you can do for your kids

Make sure your kids do not undertake the



bare minimum of our school education today. Although your kids may resent it, they must study and you should oversee that they do not slowly slip into an educational rut. With the combined efforts, our nation can once again rise to a high and honored position of educational status.

## How do they do it?

### Teen stars keep in touch with fans

BY HARTLEA HEATH  
BELTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Celebrities are just regular people like us, and that is no different for teenage stars such as the Jonas Brothers, Miley Cyrus, Demi Lovato and Selena Gomez.

They love to keep in contact with their millions of fans. Now, in the 21st century, there are a lot of ways celebrities keep in close contact to their fans.

Cyrus and her best friend (who is one of Miley's backup dancers)

Mandy Jiroux, have an account on Youtube called "The Miley and Mandy Show"

where basically Miley shows off her goofy 16-year-old self. The ever-popular Jonas Brothers (Nick,

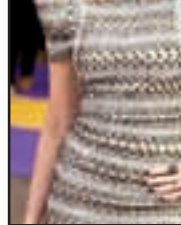
Kevin and Joe) have a YouTube account with the username "JonasBrothersMusic" in which the three siblings make funny homemade videos about upcoming events, while some of their videos are about the most random topics, including videos titled "Killing Time," "The Nick J. Show," "Scratch and Sniff" and others.

YouTube is not the only way celebrities connect to their fans. Many of them go the MySpace way. Lovato and Gomez are an example of posting numerous blogs on MySpace, talking about current events, and what they have been doing lately. For example, Lovato wrote on one of her blogs recently about creating "Meatloaf Wednesday" with friend Miley Cyrus. The Jonas Brothers post numerous blogs a day, and comment back to some lucky fans who might have posted a comment earlier on their page.

Then, of course, there are the fan club or fan sites. Cyrus and Jonas Brothers have official fan clubs titled "MileyWorld" and "Team Jonas." Although it costs a fee to sign up for these fan clubs, you get additional perks like getting to buy new albums before the general public, a fan club package and being first to get tickets for concerts.

As part of "Team Jonas," I know that these perks are not the average rip-offs you normally see online. Alex Allen, a seventh-grader at Belton Middle School, said, "Yes, I do like how celebrities use YouTube and MySpace to keep in touch with fans. The Jonas Brothers have really funny videos."

I, for one, am really glad that teenage celebrities keep up with their fans this way. It really helps them stay connected with their millions of fans.



Fans of Miley Cyrus, otherwise known as Hannah Montana, can visit these sites:

**Fan Club**  
www.mileyworld.com  
**YouTube**  
www.youtube.com/user/mileymandy?blend=1&ob4



Get your Jonas Brothers fix at these Web sites:

**Fan Club**  
www.jonasbrothersfanclub.com  
**MySpace profile**  
http://profile.myspace.com/jonasbrothers  
**Jonas Brothers' YouTube Channel**  
www.youtube.com/user/JonasBrothersMusic

# Under peer pressure?

## Talking to Belton Middle School students about their experiences

BY JOHN GREENWAY, SONNY SULLIVAN AND TAYLOR MANZELLA  
BELTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Peer pressure ... no one likes it, but it seems like everyone experiences it.

Peer pressure is when you are forced to do something you may or may not want to do. You are usually pressured by your friends or family. Bad peer pressure can cause lying, emotional distress and guilt. It can cause you to do things that you know are wrong and that you shouldn't do.

Peer pressure isn't always bad, though. Good peer pressure can motivate you to try new things and branch out as a person. We interviewed several students from Belton

### TIPS TO ESCAPE PEER PRESSURE

- **Strong body language:** Usually, a kid that has passive, or shy, body language is most likely to be targeted for peer pressure.
- **Use an assertive tone:** If someone is trying to goad you into doing something you don't want to, make sure you let them know verbally.
- **A firm tone:** If a peer isn't getting the message the first time, then use a stronger tone of voice so they know you are serious about not getting involved. Stand up to friends: Just because you want your friend to like you, doesn't mean you have to do everything they say.

SOURCE: Keepkidshealthy.com

Middle School, but agreed not to use their names, and here are the results.

### Six Grade

We interviewed four students who have all gone through peer pressure or witnessed it.

#### Have you ever been affected by peer pressure?

All four answered yes and some were more affected than others.

#### How far has peer pressure taken you?

One sixth-grader has been affected greatly; she was pressured to steal drugs for friends. The peer pressure caused the student to lie more than once about the situation. The student never confessed and felt guilty about what she did.

Another student's brother pressured him to go behind their parents' backs.

However, two students were pressured in a positive way. One was pressured into trying out for student council. She has come to like it and is glad her friends encouraged her.

#### What age did peer pressure begin for you?

All four students agreed that peer pressure began around fourth grade and has become increasingly worse.

### Seventh Grade

We interviewed three seventh-graders to see what their opinions about peer pressure are.

#### What's the worst thing peer pressure has led you to do?

"The farthest peer pressure had pushed me was smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol." The student says her choice was a mistake and if she could go back and

change it she would.

#### Have you ever peer-pressured another person?

Another student answered yes, he pressured someone into taking his parents' car after midnight. "Peer pressuring someone else was wrong and I felt regretful for my actions."

#### Who peer pressures you the most?

"My friends have peer pressured me the most, whether it is good peer pressure or bad."

### Eighth Grade

BMS eighth-graders answered questions on peer pressure.

#### Have you ever been affected by peer pressure? And how?

"Skipping class with my best friend and then getting caught by my mom."

#### Was the outcome worth it?

"No it wasn't worth it. I wish it never had happened. I wish I wouldn't have let her talk me into it."

#### What's the worst thing peer pressure has made you do?

"I smoked reefer with my friends because my brother called me a sissy and said I wasn't cool." The student later said that he regretted doing it and he wouldn't want it to happen to anyone else.

#### What's the best way to say no?

"The best way to say no is to just ignore them and say that you don't want to."

Based on the varied responses from students, the conclusion is that peer pressure is more common than we would like to think.

Peer pressure is dangerous and can have bad results. Kids need to remember to stay away from situations where they can do something they would regret because of peer pressure. They need to do what they know is right and not be forced into situations by their friends and family.

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