

# Why Do Teachers' Kids Under-perform at School?

*And is it the same reason dentist's kids have bad teeth?*

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You've heard the expression that dentists' kids have bad teeth, doctors' kids are obese, lawyers' kids are always getting arrested, Prince Harry isn't very regal and so on. Let's not even get into father-son relationships.

I don't know what any of that means either, but it seems to me that “teachers' kids under-perform at school” as a generalisation has at least as much value as “French people like wine”. In my experience.

What I mean is: They under-perform at school, academically.

Otherwise, really great kids – don't get me wrong. Independent-minded, creative possibly, bright and interesting people.

But, let's face it – they're not bringing home reports with mostly As and Bs.

Disagree? Okay, maybe you're right. Agree or sort of agree, please read on...

**The question is of course: why?**

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I have a theory, of course (thanks for reading on BTW).

When I first heard this theory from a friend I was deeply offended for a while. It struck against my delusional working class hero sense of pride. But I think he's on to something.

As a teacher working in a number of international schools, and having at the same time school-age children, it became obvious to me that my children were generally out-performed academically by most of the other

children. These academically superior children were the sons and daughters of business people, lawyers, doctors – in other words, people who had succeeded within the system and knew how to succeed. And invariably these successful people were not maverick, first-generation success stories, risen from the ashes of poverty and ignorance. No; their parents also knew how to succeed and made sure their children did too.

So what did they know about success within the system? What they knew is that you have to push your children hard, you have to be strict with your children, make sure they do all their homework, make sure they practice the piano an hour every day and load them up with evening and weekend extra classes and practices.

I was never that way with my kids and I can say the same for the parents I knew who also had their own children in the school. Why is that? Why are the children of wealthy people having so much pressure put on them when the children of teachers are given so much slack?

There are two reasons I can think. Firstly, a big factor is that the parent who is a teacher has also spent the whole day and the whole week in school and appreciates the need for a break and a separate home life.

But the second one is the one which is key to this theory. These teachers were not pushed hard as children themselves, if pushed at all, and succeeded by being exceptional. So many teachers of my generation were first-generation university graduates. We succeeded by being exceptional, stand-out, one-in-a-hundred kids. I guess then we hope that this will work for our own kids and of course it invariably doesn't and we risk ending up disappointed and frustrated. I confess, as an academically very successful person myself it has been very painful to see my own children being so mediocre.

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It's difficult to know what to conclude from this, if it's true. If you are a first-generation relative success story who was given no push to succeed and was able to do it by being exceptional, and you pursue the same parenting approach with your own kids, then don't be surprised if your kids don't get the top grades.

What I am definitely NOT saying is that we should be pushing our kids more, fellow teachers. I am not even saying that the other parents should be pushing their kids less. Really it's just an observation.

It's a theory which I think explains a lot and it also sheds a distasteful light on the whole mainstream education paradigm, in my view. It's a competitive paradigm and it leaves no room for children to have happy and relaxed childhoods. If you don't push your kids hard at school then they will be outperformed by the others. If you do push them hard, they will become stressed-out and burnt-out brain-washed robots.

A third alternative, and one I recommend, is to take your kids out of school and teach them yourself, since you already know how.