

GPA may be contagious in high-school social networks

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High school students whose friends' average grade point average (GPA) is greater than their own have a tendency to increase their own GPA over the course of a year, according to research published February 13 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* by Hiroki Sayama from Binghamton University and his collaborators from Maine-Endwell High School in Endwell, New York, including four high school student researchers.

Previous studies have shown that a student's social network can influence obesity, emotional state and other cognitive traits and behavior.

However, this is the first to examine how peer groups can influence academic progress over time. To assess this effect, the researchers first asked eleventh grade students to categorize their peers as best friends, friends, acquaintances, strangers or relatives. The researchers then mapped how students performed in school relative to their peer group, and correlated their social network with the change of their [academic performance](#) over time.

They found that students' whose friends were performing better academically were more likely to improve their own scores over time. The opposite effect was also seen: When their friends' GPA were lower, a given student's GPA was more likely to decrease as well.

The authors also found that the strongest link between a student's GPA change and that of their peers was likely to be with those they had ranked as friends, rather than best friends or acquaintances. They state, "While most educators already know the importance of [social](#)

[environment](#) for a student's academic success, our study presents the first quantitative supporting evidence for such empirical knowledge."

More information: *PLoS ONE* 8(2): e55944.
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