

## **Family Situation as Factor of the Academic Progress of Students**

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### **Abstract**

*Improving the quality of education requires constant monitoring of its status and development trends, objective and adequate assessment of academic progress of students. This is especially important at the level of secondary education that lays the foundation for their further personal and civic development. As is known, the family is designed to provide rational organization of the child's life, help to internalize the positive experience of living and working, to gain valuable individual experience of activity, habits, and attitudes, what has a definite positive effect on the success of the child as a learner and his academic progress. The researchers aimed to identify dependencies between the typology of family upbringing (upbringing capacities of the family as a group) and the child's success. This article proposes the results of a survey of opinions of 8 & 9 grades students from more than 10 secondary schools of Almaty (Kazakhstan).*

**Keywords:** family capital, family values, educational environment, academic performance, spare time, quality of educational process

### **Introduction**

In describing the conditions of educational process, the focus is normally on the factors related to the curriculum, organization of teaching process and school facilities which influence academic progress of students. It is recognized that the progress of students is significantly influenced by their families and attitude of the students to educational process. In general, the scientific literature claims that the results of didactical and upbringing activities of a student depend not only on his own interest, but on the actions of the teacher, organization of studies, program themes, and much on the social environment and the family of the student. I.e., some researches in sociology and psychology emphasize that not only schools are responsible for the growth and academic performance of school students, but the family is a key factor of academic progress of young people [1; 2]. Coleman J.S. [3], Davis- P.E. Kean [4], D.L. Konstantinovsky [5], V.S. Vakhshayn, Ya.M. Foschini [6] *et al.* justify the interdependence of the level of academic progress of students from the family capital (various types of resources: economic capital – earnings, human capital – parental education, family capital – density of internal and external social networks).

But other researches prove that the family structure, occupation and educational level of parents have no significant impact on students and their progress in subjects.

Yes, the family has a potential to influence academic progress of the child because the family is the first environment for the child, the initial experience that forms the values of the child, his aspirations, emotions, interests and relationships [7]. The significance of these studies is that they draw the attention of the teachers to the fact that their students come from different family traditions and therefore have different upbringing. Thus they will definitely show different signs and behavior. Therefore the research findings will allow teachers to pay more attention to individual differences of students as they perform their teaching activities in the classroom.

Another thing is the so-called parental involvement. There is some interesting evidence that the parental involvement which includes provision of safe and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, discussion of the child's progress, constructive social and educational values and high desire for self-realization, participation in school management plays an important part in academic progress of the child [8].

In the course of our study it was expected to reveal the relationship between the typology of family upbringing (upbringing capacities of the family as a group) and the child's performance.

Russian explanatory dictionary defines "progress" as a positive results of some efforts, a success [9]. We consider **individual academic progress of students** as collection of academic and extracurricular results achieved by students in educational institutions over a certain period of time. Assessment of academic progress through **educational** results – measurable achievements of students reflecting the compliance of educational results to the state requirements stipulated by the state educational standards. At that, **transparent educational results** shall be identified as basic educational results that reflect the achievements of students at all levels of education, stages of education. Transparent educational results can be measured through:

- Educational autonomy, which implies the ability of a student to create and use tools for own personal development;
- Educational initiative - the ability to build one's own educational trajectory, the ability to create the right situations for one's own development and to use them adequately;
- Educational responsibility - the ability to make decisions for yourself about the willingness to act in certain unusual situations. We used these very criteria as the basis for understanding the educational outcomes of school students.

Besides we proceeded from the assumption that the considered age category of students belongs to elder adolescence. This is the period of formation of own moral attitudes and requirements that define the nature of relationships with peers and elders. There appears an ability to resist the influence of others and claim what the adolescents themselves consider as doubtless and correct. Adolescents are able to consciously achieve goals, are ready for challenging activities.

Psychologists distinguish the following vital needs of this age: the need for self-knowledge, self-evaluation, self-determination, self-education, in psychological and emotional independence, in achieving a certain social status [10]. In the same age, the teens are in need of professional self-determination what is associated with a general tendency of this age to find a place in life [11].

### **Research Methodology**

The research was supposed to answer the question: How does the typology of family upbringing, that is, upbringing capacities of the family as a group, influence the success of the child as a learner and his academic progress?

The researchers have developed for the study a **questionnaire** in the main areas of research: organization of learning activities at home; preferences, self-esteem and values; estimation by school students of their family environment; educational opportunities and academic progress. 14 questions of the questionnaire (17%) were formulated as open questions (the respondents could give answers on free lines left after the questions) what allowed the students to express their own vision on the problems, and therefore detailize the results of analysis. The questionnaires were prepared in Russian and Kazakh languages [12].

Data collection method – completing the questionnaire by school students during 40 minutes. In distribution, completing and collecting of completed questionnaires the researchers used contact questioning, direct contact with the participants.

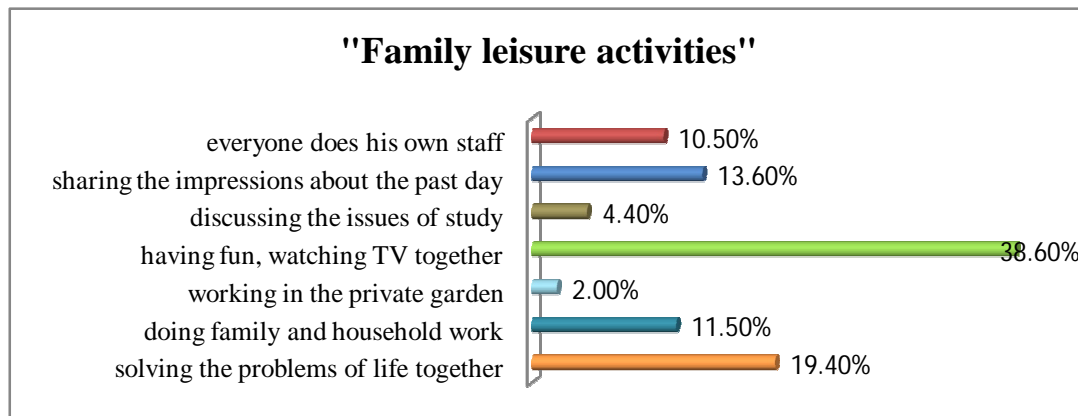
The researchers applied quota multistage random sampling pro rata the contingent of students in the upper grades of secondary schools of the city of Almaty. In total, the project covered 723 students of 8 & 9 grades from one Kazakh and one Russian school from each of the 7 districts of the city of Almaty.

By language of teaching, the respondents were distributed as follows: 61% students of various schools and classes with Kazakh language of teaching; 39% students of various schools and classes with Russian language of teaching. The research covered 57% of girls and 43% of boys.

### **Main Part**

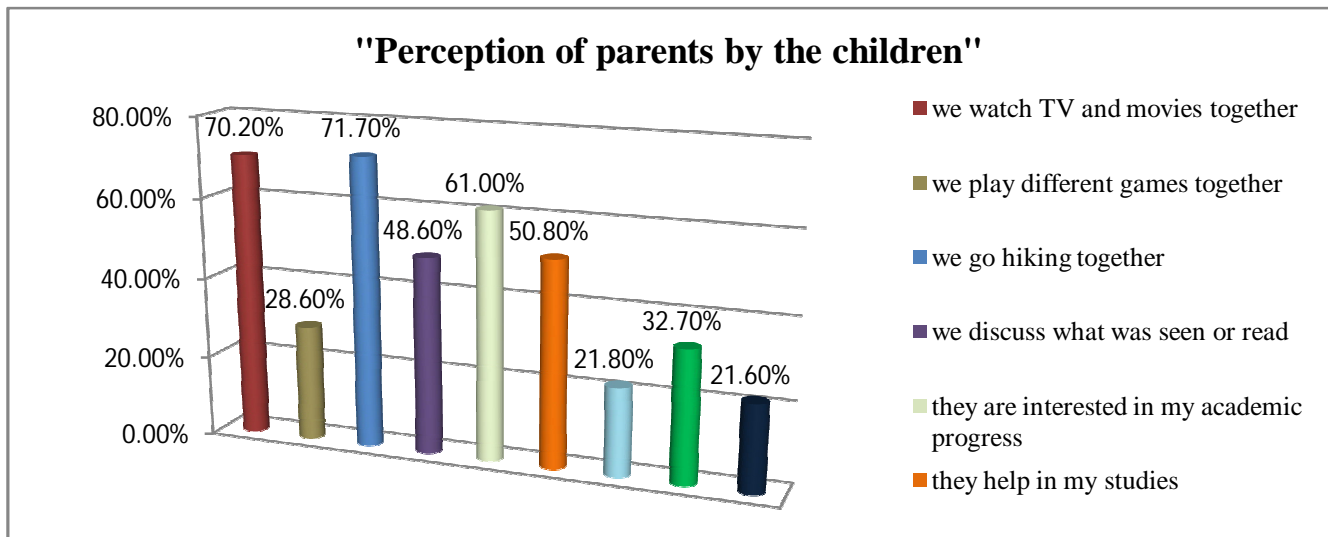
Many researches show that academic progress of school students largely depends on the their family, its atmosphere, the support and the values of their parents. The questioning shows that most of the respondents come from complete families (75% live together with mother and father), and 25% of the respondents come from incomplete families. Average age of parents of the respondents is 35-45 years – 65%, 30–35 years – 13%, 45 years and above – 22%. 51% of the respondents indicate that both parents have higher education, in 38% of families, one parent has higher education, and in 11% of families, the parents have no higher education. Most of the respondents are single minor children (46%), 29% of them have a brother or a sister, another 25% of the respondents have 2 and more brothers or sisters. Nearly half of the respondents have the necessary conditions for quality education, have an equipped workplace at home. The responding teenagers generally evaluate financial situation in their families as a positive one. Nearly 90% of the respondents say they have a home library.

The following diagram describes the common activities of family members during their joint stay.



**Diagram 1: Distribution of Answers on the Question “What does the Family do, Being Together?”**

Our research shows that school students generally estimate the atmosphere in the family as positive and benevolent. 67.7% respondents think that their parents do everything for them, 15.5% notice that their parents allow them more than other parents do, 11.8% of the respondents emphasize that they often upset their parents, and only 3.21% of the respondents think that their parents impose their views, and another 1.7% – that their parents see their shortcomings more often than their merits.



**Diagram 2: Distribution of Answers on the Question “What Characterizes my Parents Most?”**

In this question, we could define the following factors as positive parameters of estimation: we watch TV and movies together; we play different games together; we go hiking together; we discuss what was seen or read; they are interested in my academic progress; they help in my studies; as neutral – we discuss situation at school, the teachers, etc.; as negative – they criticize my friends.

According to the respondents, their mothers most often participate in school events and teacher-parent meetings (76.0% of the respondents), in 16.3% cases fathers were also participating, and in 7.8% cases – other family members. At that, the students were skeptical about the level of their parents’ participation in school life: constant participation – 13.2%, quiet often – 18.9%, from time to time – 35.6%, single cases – 13.7%, and, no participation – 18.6%.

Organization of out-of-school education (at home, in the family) is significant for the success of educational activities. Quality of organization of educational activities at home much depends on the level of spare time in which the physical, intellectual and spiritual development of the child is taking place. Human activities in their spare time can be split in three groups: a) just leisure: games, entertainment, contemplation, etc.; b) education: learning, consumption of cultural values; c) creativity: technical, scientific, and arts.

Regarding the organization of educational activities at home: 41.2% of the respondents remain guideless 2–3 hours a day; 56.8% of the respondents say they have enough of spare time. 40.4% of the respondents prefer spending their spare time in the family, 30.6% of them love going out with friends, and etc.

Leisure activities have a great impact on all spheres of human activity. This impact is specially significant in adolescence which is a period of intensive development and formation of personality.

To avoid mindless spending of spare time which would contribute to the emergence of the crime situations, we should develop in adolescents the skills of self-examination, an adequate self esteem, reasonable control over their own behavior. All these skills are gained during successful mastering of the skills of self-organization by adolescents.

The following proposals were made by the school students on improvement of leisure activities of adolescents: to organize more public cultural events for adolescents, high school students – 37.9%; to go to nature or to visit historical places with classmates – 16.5%; to prepare parks for adolescents – 13.1%; to give an opportunity to relax – 18.5%; to increase the number of sports sections and events – 14%.

In their spare time on weekdays, our school students: are engaged in self-education - 8.4%; sit on the Internet - 15.7%; just resting - 20.6%, spend time with friends, and walk in the yard - 17.6% are engaged in housework - 17.2%; go to extra classes and dance groups - 20.1%.

64.8% of the respondents try to do all the homework, 20% of them usually do homework only on certain subjects, 15.2% of them normally do not do homework.

As the most significant causes of poor doing homework, the students themselves indicate: laziness (35.3%), phone & TV (17.8%), the unjust assessments (13.3%), uninteresting material (11.3%), and etc. At that, as reasons for their own inactivity in the classroom the respondents indicate that they don't like the subject (41.8%), have serious gaps in their knowledge (19.2%), cannot work independently (9.5%).

Level of academic progress is closely connected to the capacities of the student. These are the level of certain competencies for performing educational tasks, satisfaction with the obtained education, and etc. Indicators of academic progress are: attitude to learning and interest in learning, discipline and school attendance, personal educational achievements and academic performance.

The conducted questioning shows that most of school students have more or less defined life and professional priorities. So, answering the question "Have you defined your life plans and professional intentions?", 50.6% of the respondents replied that they were clearly preparing for a future profession, 40.1% of them said that their plans were not yet defined but they knew who they want to be, only 3.6% of them responded they had no plans or intentions. 5.8% of the respondents provided no answer.

Still more pragmatic results were obtained in identifying the most important life goals. 33.8% of Almaty school students mentioned the material welfare as the most important goal, 29.6% said they needed a lot of friends, 25% of them wanted to realize their intellectual capabilities, 11.6% – to find love.

Answers on the open question "What is your goal during education, studying at school?" distributed as follows:

- Receive a grant – 14,3%;
- Move abroad – 2,1%;
- Achieve everything – 7,7%;
- Find a prestigious job – 5,6%;
- Learning, receiving quality education, learning languages – 70,3%.

Children with faithful representations about themselves, about their plans are brought up in the families where parents pay them a lot of time, positively assess their mental and physical data. The same children demonstrate good academic performance at school. Children with low self-esteem and unclear ideas grow up in families where a child is constantly decried or put to him excessive demands. In general, it is known that namely parents determinate initial level of claims of the school student – what he claims in learning activities and relationships.

Answering the open question "What you can do best of all?" the respondents say that best of all they can:

- do sports – 15.4%;
- do arts – 21.9%;
- interact with people, communicate – 16.1%;
- educate, study and cultivate themselves – 22.6%;
- do housework – 5.8%;
- were undecided – 18.2%.

And the question "What you are not very good in?" was answered as:

- running, jumping, doing sports – 10.7%;
- learning, solving tasks – 30.8%;
- restraining emotions – 6.3%;
- building relationships with people – 3.4%;
- drawing – 10.2%;
- taking advice and listening – 3.3%;
- defending my own position – 4.8%;
- understanding the technology and computer – 11.9%;
- difficult to give answers – 18.6%.

Most of the respondents from 8 & 9 grades would like to be better in:

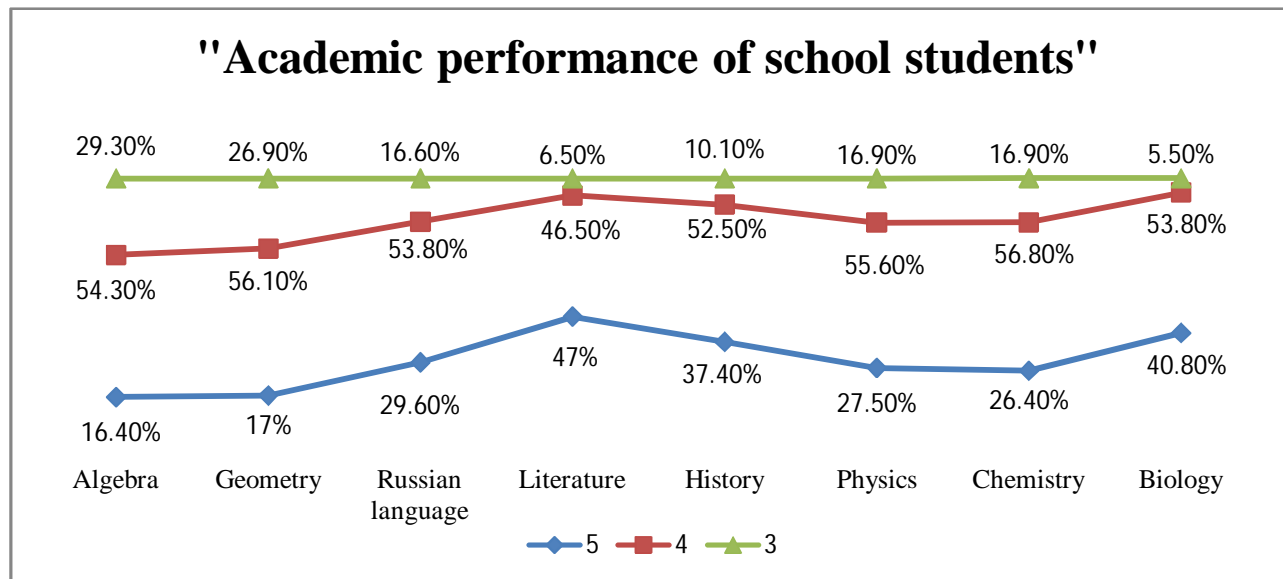
- school subjects (especially, algebra, geometry, chemistry, biology) – 28.4%;
- speaking foreign languages – 12.2%;
- solving problems and making independent decisions – 5.8%;

- cooking – 3.4%;
- singing, dancing – 9.8%;
- educating themselves and improving their skills – 2.8%;
- doing arts – 18.7%
- interacting with people – 3.4%;
- doing sports – 6.5%;
- difficult to give answers – 9%.

Most of school students have an interest or hobby which they do for several years. This was communicated by 73.5% of the respondents, 12.1% of them answered their interest was not long-lasting.

Thus, judging by the questions on the given answers we see that self-esteem in elder adolescence is very stable, and covers various spheres of life activity. Judgments of adolescents about themselves convey a light background of their mood, feeling the joy of being. Adolescents reveal themselves in categories that reflect their training activities, favorite activities, interests and hobbies.

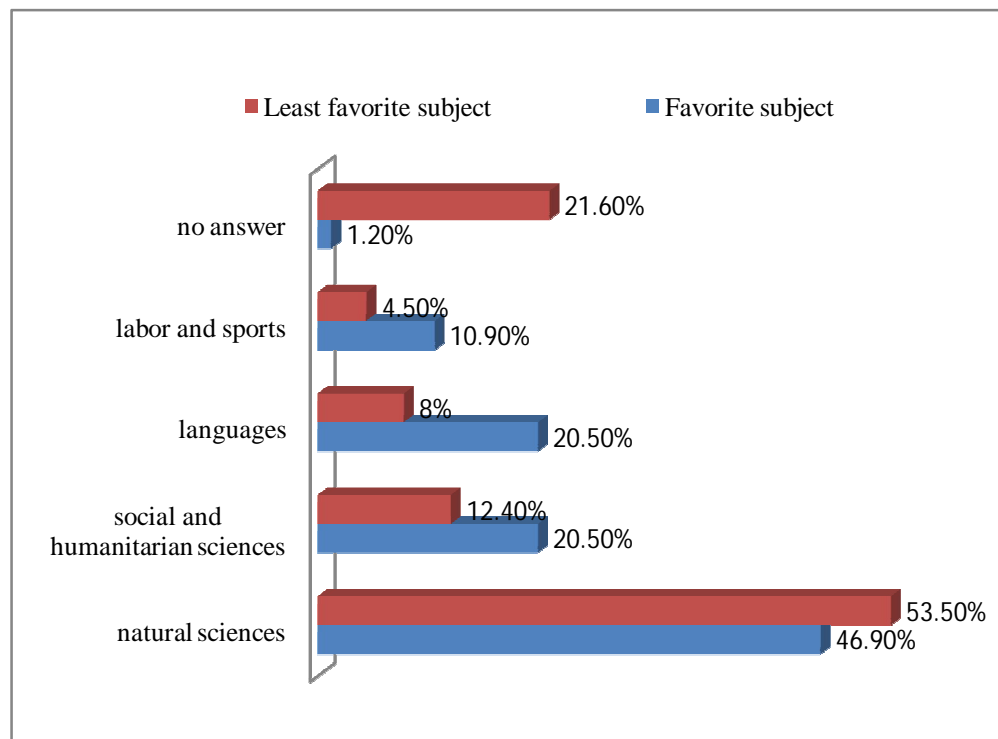
**Academic performance** can be seen as one of the socially valuable resources accumulated by students during their school education and then converted into educational achievements.



**Diagram 3: Distribution of Answers of the Respondents on the Question “Your Average Ratings in Subjects”**

43.2% of responding school students assess their learning as good, 41.5% – as average, 11.3% – as perfect, 4% – as poor and unsatisfactory. At that, lower ratings are fixed in such subjects as algebra, geometry, chemistry, and biology.

This picture is proven also in identifying favorite and least favorite subjects of school students. The school students have ambivalent attitude to such subjects as algebra, geometry, and Kazakh literature, as they experience difficulties in their study. In contrary to these subjects, the school students perceive physics, biology and chemistry as interesting, informative subjects necessary for the future. Russian literature and technology are considered as the most boring. At that, the respondents connect the importance of this or that subject to their future profession and life activity, and the boring nature of a subject – with a boring teacher, misunderstanding on his part and not providing timely assistance.



**Diagram 4: Distribution of Answers on the Questions “Your Favorite Subject” and “Your Least Favorite Subject”**

Most of all, the respondents like doing laboratory research or setting experiments (49.6%), independently work with the textbook (15.4%), solve tasks (13.6%), work with additional literature (12.9%), and analyze answers of classmates (8.6%).

53.2% of respondents have participated in Olympiads or contests in maths, history and other subjects of various levels (school level, district level, etc.). 67.3% of respondents won prizes in competitions, subject competitions, Club for the Lightheaded and Quick-witted (personally or as a part of the team), 32.7% won no prizes. 49% of respondents have prizes or awards in music, dancing and arts, 51% have no such prizes or awards.

Internal attitude of a high school student to school is formed from the whole system of relations - to school as an organization, to the process of learning and the knowledge, the teachers, the classmates. This is proved by the answers to the following questions.

40.5% of the respondents say they love going to school, 32.4% note that they rather like it, 17.9% were undecided, 6.7% note that they rather do not like it, and only 2.6% said they completely do not like it.

68.1% of respondents say that their school has all the conditions for the development of abilities of students, 20.1% were undecided, 11.9% of school students disagree, and do not think that the school reveals their ability.

However we have to notice that with all the positive attitude to school in case of problems and difficulties the students prefer to seek assistance from their friends and girlfriends – 45.4%, teacher, classroom teacher, inspector, head teacher – 7.6%, elder family members (parents and brothers) – 24.7%, and another 28.8% of them try to solve their problems independently without seeking for help.

School students adequately treat comments from teachers, and 73.2% of them try not to repeat the condemned actions, 16.6% of them listen, but still do in their own way, another 4.2% of them treat the comments passively and ignore them, and 6.1% of them have some other attitude.

Academic progress is influenced by external factors as additional services provided at school, quality of teaching and personality of the teacher, and the educational environment at school.

The respondents say that their schools provide additional services in health promotion and sports (30%), teaching foreign languages (29%), sessions with a speech therapist and defectologist (17%), in automobile engineering (13%), in communication psychology (7%), and etc.

As we can see, sessions in health promotion, sports, foreign languages and etc. have a high percentage.

### **Findings**

Family environment is the main determinant of the emotional sphere of a person, its moral outlook and ideological upbringing. The parents shall facilitate the adoption by the child of school duties, ensure good preparation for these tasks and facilitate their implementation at home creating better conditions for children's most harmonious development in a friendly, reasonable dialogue with them.

In general, the research findings show that family conditions (social status, occupation, education level of parents) do not have a significant impact on academic progress of students. The impact is that the parents are more serious about providing their children with a quality education and cultivate their knowledge. Main factor is the support from the family, its help and atmosphere that form a positive attitude towards the school and learning. In the families of the respondents the intellectual efforts of the child are recognized an essential value, and therefore such children perceive studies as a natural, useful, pleasant, action, and not as a heavy duty.

No significant difference was found in the achievement of positive educational results by children from complete and incomplete families. In general, the participating respondents from incomplete families perceive the atmosphere in the family as cheerful and joyful, are also focused on success, on receiving quality education. Still, the research findings show their lower academic progress in comparison to the peers from complete families, and expressed desire of students from incomplete families to get a profession and earn money independently.

Academic progress of school students is influenced by such factors as adequacy and maturity of their self-esteem, the educational environment at school, the proficiency of teachers. The teacher intrinsically becomes an integral member of the family, another parent who plays an important role in upbringing of the student. In most cases, the students connect their learning difficulties with lack of attention and injustice of the teacher, boring organization of lessons.

The obtained results allow providing some recommendations to teachers and classroom teachers on improving the quality of their interaction with adolescents.

Students of 8 & 9 grade belong to older adolescents. The general scheme of development in later adolescence looks as follows:

- General emotional maturation characterized by a shift to constructive feelings, balance, an objective interpretation of the situation;
- Social maturation characterized by confident planning for the future, the transition to an agreement with the demands of society and active participation in public affairs;
- Intellectual and cognitive maturation, characterized by the transition from superficial to permanent interests, to adequate evaluation of their capabilities and the choice of appropriate profession, the ability to explain and bring arguments.

In this connection, when dealing with adolescents, the teachers and classroom teacher shall:

- Clearly explain to a student his rights and obligations, types of activity (available and allowed to him) and liability for them;
- Establish credibility by showing the positive qualities of the teenager, his personal identifying potential resources, guiding the teenager, enhancing his purposeful life orientation;
- Be patient, listen to the teenager completely, without irritation, not reacting immediately;
- In conflict situations, act only by tactical maneuver and never - by direct attack, not bargain, use humor.

Adolescence is not uniform in its psychological content and value, and is the biggest "headache" for the parents. In this connection, together with the planned interaction with parents, educating function of such interaction should be enhanced. Teacher-parent meeting can be a stage to address such issues as regularities of mental development in later adolescence, understanding positive content of age crises, ways and means of constructive resolution of conflict situations, awareness of their child's strengths.



## Conclusion

The research findings show that, *first of all*, the school has always been and remains one of the important institutes providing starting educational opportunities of a child in society, and the educational environment at school delivers all the conditions for obtaining the necessary level of education, *second*, main motivation of the responding school students of 8 & 9 grade is the active pursuit of personal self-improvement; high school students are well aware of the connection between their future career and education; they are active in social life.

Such positive findings may be relevant for the city of Almaty, they could be the result of the tremendous efforts of our teachers. But if we make in the future a large-scale survey in all regions of Kazakhstan, we could get answers on the questions: What do we do wrong? If we allocate funds and create all the conditions for good academic progress, why we are not in top 10 according to PISA research? ...

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