Some Habits Hurt Academic Performance, But There Are Solutions

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Lots of things can affect how well students do in school, and given the new technology that surrounds us all, there are many obstacles to students doing their best.

Too Much Screen Time

One of those variables, which definitely affects Altamont students, is screen time and social media use.



Researchers have long noticed an inverse relationship between non-educational screen time and academic performance. According to a study in Frontiers of Psychology, increases in screen time – often brought on by purposefully addicting social media – is linked to decreases in memory, attention, and critical thinking. This is why educators, psychologists, and public health professionals recommend limiting screen usage for children and adolescents.

Social media makes us redirect our attention and then lose focus on other tasks. Spending an hour scrolling online instead of working on a school project becomes easier and more interesting, but the mindlessness of scrolling on social media can become addictive and result in difficulty focusing on schoolwork. And the difficulty of *transitioning* from scrolling on social media to studying also affects students' ability to manage their time. Since scrolling is so mindless, it is hard to switch to work that is challenging.

But by putting schoolwork ahead of social media use, students can use their energy on tasks that require the most focus and thinking.

Not Enough Sleep

Another common problem is sleep deprivation. Sleep is crucial for developing children and adolescents, yet many do not get enough. According to Sleep Foundation, children ages six to twelve need roughly nine to eleven hours of sleep every night. Teenagers require eight to ten hours of sleep for proper memory retention, cognition, attention, and creativity, all of which are crucial for good academic performance.

Altamont students, however, often have demanding schedules (classes, jobs, extracurricular activities, and homework), which can translate into a lack of time to get the proper amount of sleep. Students frequently appear tired. When they don't get enough sleep, young people show deficits in attention, memory, and problem solving. Lack of sleep can also contribute to emotional and behavioral problems that may affect academics and relationships.



The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) offers the following tips on how to get a good night's sleep:

- Follow a consistent bedtime routine.
- Establish a relaxing setting at bedtime.
- Avoid foods or drinks that contain caffeine, as well as any medicine that has a stimulant, prior to bedtime.
- Do not stay up all hours of the night to "cram" for an exam or do homework. If after-school activities are proving to be too time-consuming, consider cutting back.
- Keep screens out of the bedroom.

- Do not go to bed hungry, but do not eat a big meal before bedtime.
- Avoid any rigorous exercise within six hours of your bedtime.
- Make your bedroom quiet, dark, and cool.
- Get up at the same time every morning.

Ineffective study habits

Bad study habits might not catch up with you right away but are ultimately unlikely to lead to success later in school or in life. Procrastinating, inefficient time management, cramming, and studying or working with distractions are only a few examples.

In "A Study on Study Habits and Academic Performance of Students" in Research Gate, researchers confirmed a significant relationship between academic performance and study habits. Here are a few ways to improve them:

- Study with a plan: Creating a plan or schedule to study improves the chances that you'll cover what you need to cover.
- Avoid procrastinating: Start on assignments well before their due date. That helps students avoid getting overwhelmed when work starts to pile up.
- Restrict phone access: *Silence all notifications while you work*. To avoid temptation, keep your phone out of arms reach or give it to a trusted individual.
- A wise person once said, "Multitasking is doing many things badly." Do not multitask: Focus on one thing at a time by dividing assignments or material to study into groups and completing them separately.
- Do not forget to take breaks: Taking breaks helps preserve energy and maintain productivity. Studying for long periods of time can lead to burnout, low retention levels, and distraction.

By putting schoolwork ahead of social media use, students can use their energy on tasks that require the most focus and thinking and are actually important for students' futures. Creating good study habits is important to help students succeed in school and ultimately, in life.