The negative impacts of underage alcohol use on academic performance can affect not only drinkers, but their student peers. While the effects of heavy, binge drinking* may be evident the same day or next day, moderate or occasional alcohol consumption by youth can have a less-observable impact. Research shows that youth alcohol use changes in the brain that affect young learners’ ability to:

- Form memories of facts and events
- Learn new information
- Use executive functioning skills in support of their academics
- Comprehend and interpret visual information
- Comprehend language and maintain short-term verbal memories

### Alcohol Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol Use</th>
<th>% of U.S. high school students who engaged in each drinking behavior by grades mostly earned.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>A’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever drank (at least 1 drink)</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current use (at least 1x in last 30 days)</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binge drinking (5+ drinks in a row at least 1x in last 30 days)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drank before age 13 (more than a few sips)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHEN FRIENDS DRINK
Taking care of or interacting with intoxicated friends can result in problems for non-drinkers that can affect their academic performance as well. Problems include:

- Study time disruptions
- Sleep disruptions
- Time spent taking care of drunk or buzzed friends
- Assaults at the hands of drinkers
- Humiliation and insults from intoxicated peers

THE COLLEGE YEARS
About one in four college students report academic consequences from drinking, including:

- Missing classes
- Falling behind in classes
- Reduced study hours for males; increased study hours for females who report needing to work harder to compensate for the negative effects of drinking
- Doing poorly on exams or papers
- Receiving lower grades overall

Heavy drinking has also been indicated as a probable contributor to student retention at colleges and universities.

*Binge drinking is defined by five or more alcoholic drinks within a two-hour period for males, four for females.

REFERENCE SOURCES
- 2009 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health
- 2018 Illinois Youth Survey
- National Consortium on Alcohol and Neurodevelopment in Adolescence, 2014
- J. Staff, M. Patrick, E. Loken, J. Maggs; Teenage Alcohol Use and Educational Attainment (Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, 2008 Nov; 69(6): 848–858)