

## Fitting In

Fitting in is very important to most students—especially in the middle school / junior high years. It is something that every child must deal with in one way or another.

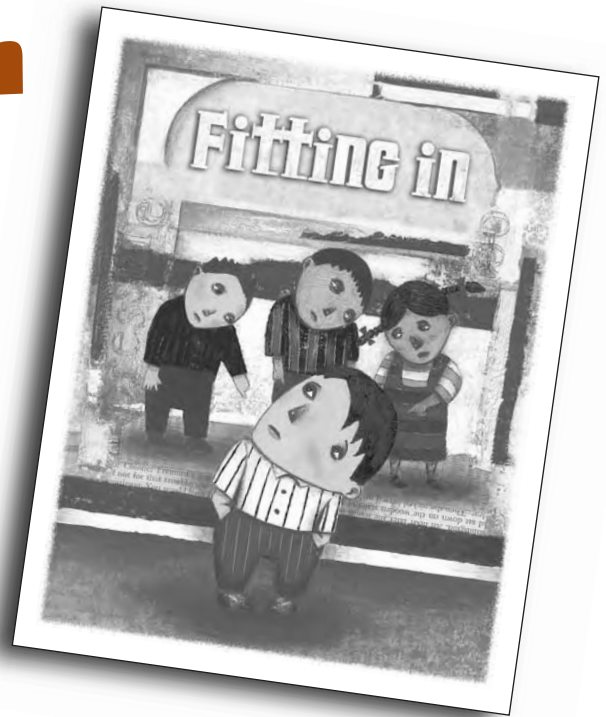
Peer pressure to fit in with one group or another can be either positive or negative. Positive peer pressure can change things for the better. Negative peer pressure can change things for the worse.

One of the most important things adolescents can learn is how to tell the difference.

The student supplement “Fitting In” was created to give students information and strategies for understanding the peer pressure involved with fitting in at school and in the community. This Teacher Guide is designed to extend the lessons of the supplement through the daily newspaper.

It is divided into themed sections: an overview of our “Material World,” “The Pressures Around Us,” “The Pressure to Fit In” and “Opinions.” Each offers activities that use the newspaper to explore the issues that surround fitting in and activity sheets that you may photocopy and distribute to students.

As an added bonus, a reference line is included for each activity showing how the activity demonstrates or enhances national educational standards and skills.



### WEEK 1

- Sneaker Alert
- Labels or Uniforms
- Fitting In & Fashion
- Editorial Art
- Musical Tastes
- Ad Pressure

### WEEK 2

- Pressure Poem
- Advertising Pressure
- Job Pressure
- Media Pressure
- Money Pressure
- Rules Pressure

### WEEK 3

- Doing the Right Thing
- Responding to Pressure
- Sports Tastes
- Much to Admire
- The Opposite Sex
- Photo Pressure

### WEEK 4

- Speaking Up
- Fitting In With Others
- Differences
- A Jury of Your Peers
- Photo Assignment
- Crime Watch

## MATERIAL WORLD

*Many things affect how students fit in—or how they THINK they fit in. Often, material possessions are an issue. Clothes, sneakers, jewelry, electronics — all the “stuff” kids like and want — can be a source of competition and pressure among students. The activities on this page will introduce the newspaper to students by examining issues arising from our “Material World.”*

### 1. Sneaker Alert

The popularity of sneakers and shoes changes almost as quickly as the popularity of songs on the radio. Pressure to buy or want certain brands can heighten interest in those brands. Have students search the ads for popular footwear in the newspaper. Have them rank the top five items for popularity. Then ask them to write a paragraph explaining why they would choose their favorite kind of footwear.

**STANDARDS/SKILLS:** Responding to a variety of visual, written and electronic texts by making connections to students’ personal lives and lives of others; writing fluently for multiple purposes; analyzing and critical thinking.

### 2. Labels or Uniforms?

The popularity of designer labels sometimes is used to judge the popularity of the kids who wear or don’t wear such clothing. Many schools have responded by requiring all students to wear a standard uniform so that no one will feel pressured about having, nor not having, a certain brand. Challenge students to write three reasons school uniforms are a good idea and three reasons they are a bad idea. Then have them write a brief editorial stating whether school uniforms are a good idea.

**STANDARDS/SKILLS:** Posing questions about matters of public concern that students have encountered in school or the community; comparing their own viewpoint with those of others; engaging each other in conversations that attempt to clarify issues of policy.

### 3. Fitting In & Fashion \*

Students are very observant when it comes to their peers. They notice what their classmates wear, if they have gotten something new, if they change a style. Often they comment on these things, and not always kindly. Have students complete the “Fitting In & Fashion” activity sheet about material things they have commented on to their peers. Tally and average results in each category for the class.

**STANDARDS/SKILLS:** Collecting and exploring data through surveys and sampling techniques; organizing data using tables, charts and graphs.

### 4. Editorial Art

Editorial cartoons use art to state opinions. Ask students to find an editorial cartoon in today’s newspaper. Then have them draw a cartoon of their own stating an opinion on how the pressure to fit in can be seen in the way students act about material things.

**STANDARDS/SKILLS:** Identifying and using aspects of the craft of the illustrator to formulate and express ideas artistically; identifying and using persuasive techniques.

### 5. Musical Tastes

Students’ musical tastes vary greatly. And kids can be extremely outspoken about people who have different tastes than their own. Have students find an ad or story about a musical artist in the newspaper today or in the weekend entertainment guide. Tell them they have been named music critic for a day. Have them write a short review of the artist with the goal of persuading their peers to like him/her.

**STANDARDS/SKILLS:** Using oral, written and visual texts to identify and research issues; using research findings to organize and create texts to persuade others to take a particular position; integrating listening, reading and writing skills.

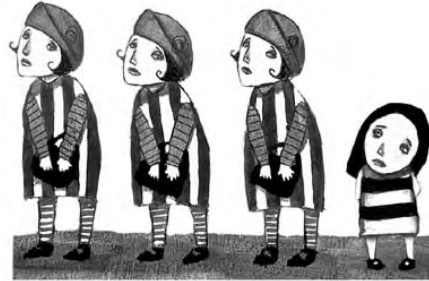
### 6. Ad Pressure \*

Understanding pressure to fit in can be enhanced by learning more about how group opinions form. One way to do that is to look at advertising that makes products seem beautiful, desirable and “cool.” As a class discuss ads students have seen on television that made the products seem “cool” and how the ad makes them want to purchase the product. Then have them examine and analyze the ads in the newspaper using the “Cool, Baby, Cool” activity sheet. Have them write a paragraph on the ad they felt was the coolest in today’s newspaper.

**STANDARDS/SKILLS:** Acquiring information from multiple sources and then evaluating, organizing and communicating it; generating questions about issues that affect students; organizing and synthesizing information to draw conclusions.

# FITTING IN & FASHION

Students are very observant when it comes to their peers. You notice what your classmates wear, if they have gotten something new, if they change a style. Often you comment on these things, and not always kindly. In the spaces below, mark the things you have commented on to a friend or classmate—and how. Tally and average the results for each category for the class. Finish by seeing how many of the items you can find in the ads or photos in the newspaper today.



Item	COMMENT																		
	Positive	←									→	Negative							
1. Music or Artist on CD	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1
2. Sneaker/Footwear	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1
3. Haircut	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1
4. Brand of Shirt/Blouse	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1
5. Style of Jacket	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1
6. Makeup/Cologne	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1
7. Video Rental	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1
8. Computer/Arcade Game	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1
9. Favorite Fast Food	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1
10. Jewelry/Sunglasses	10	—	9	—	8	—	7	—	6	—	5	—	4	—	3	—	2	—	1

## Rank Yourself

Add up your answers to figure your Fashion Fitting In Points. Then rank yourself:

80-100—Nice talk!    40-79—OK to Be Around    0-39—Ouch! Stay Away!

# COOL, BABY, COOL

Understanding pressure to fit in can be helped by learning more about how group opinions form. One way to do that is to look at advertising that makes products seem beautiful, desirable or "cool." As a class discuss ads you have seen on television that made products seem "cool" and how the ads make you want to purchase the product. Consider how images, filming techniques, fashions, music and models influence the effect of the ad, and build peer acceptance in the target group. Then examine and analyze the ads in the newspaper. In the space below rank the coolest ad in today's paper by filling in a "Cool Quote" for each category.



Category	Rank	Cool Quote
Product/Service for Sale: _____	_____	_____
Use of Photo/Image: _____	_____	_____
Model(s): _____	_____	_____
Layout/Display: _____	_____	_____
Style of Type: _____	_____	_____
Motto/Headline: _____	_____	_____
Special Effect(s): _____	_____	_____

**'Cooliosity' Rating**  
 (1-100) 100 = Way Cool 1 = Not

## THE PRESSURES AROUND US

*In the world today people feel a lot of pressure. And not just the pressure to fit in. We feel pressures about doing our best or doing better. We feel pressure when we make mistakes or don't live up to our families' hopes. We feel pressure from advertising and the media. The activities on this page will explore "The Pressures Around Us."*

### 1. Pressure Poem \*

Ask students to look through the newspaper today and find eight words to describe their feelings about the pressure to fit in—one starting with each letter of the word. Have them write an eight-line poem or rap, using each word to start a line.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Employing multiple strategies to construct meaning; writing fluently for multiple purposes, including poetry; recognizing techniques to express feelings.*

### 2. Advertising Pressure

Advertising is a kind of pressure. Often ads suggest that products will make buyers more attractive, successful or hip by using models that look that way. Have students look through the ads in the newspaper and clip one that uses attractive men or women as models. Ask students to write a sentence or two stating what use of the models "says" about the product—and whether this message puts pressure on the reader.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Responding personally, analytically and critically to visual, written and electronic texts; recognizing techniques used to convey meaning and express feelings to influence an audience.*

### 3. Job Pressure

When people need a job, they can feel tremendous pressure. Ask students to look through the Classified Ads in today's newspaper for the Help Wanted listings. Challenge them to pick three jobs for which they could qualify IF THEY HAD TO GET A JOB TODAY. Next to each, have them write the skills they have that would qualify them for the job. Finish by discussing whether the jobs picked were ideal for them or chosen because of the pressure to get one quickly.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Evaluating employment and career opportunities in light of economic trends; understanding the economic forces of scarcity and choice.*

### 4. Media Pressure

Have students pretend they have been named editor of the daily newspaper. The newspaper's publisher is pressuring the editor to offer a sharper and more balanced look at teen and pre-teen behavior. Challenge students to write a short editorial stating what they will cover and why it is important. Follow up by having them send their suggestions to the editor of the paper.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Responding to written and visual texts by making connections to students' personal lives; using texts to identify and research issues of importance that confront adolescents; utilizing the persuasive power of text.*

### 5. Money Pressure \*

Families and groups often argue or feel pressure on how to spend the money they have. Divide students into teams or pairs and give them a \$1,000 budget to spend. Send students through the newspaper to pick the items they will buy. All purchases must appear in an advertisement somewhere in the paper. Have them tally their purchases on the "Money Pressure" activity sheet and show the math. Finish by discussing their choices—and whether there were pressures within groups on making them.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Identifying the ways families produce and consume goods and services; using a decision-making model to explain personal choices; designing a strategy for spending.*

### 6. Rules Pressure

Not all pressures are bad. Rules for behavior—either school rules or laws enacted by elected officials—can be a positive force in creating a fair society in which everyone fits in. Discuss with students how every group creates or writes rules to positively influence behavior of its members. Then have them write out three rules in your school that are designed to create positive behavior. Finish by asking if there are school rules students would change—and discuss their reasons.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Identifying rules at school and in the community; explaining how law is used to manage conflict in society; evaluating proposals for reform.*

# Pressure Poem



Look through the newspaper today and find eight words to describe your feelings about the pressure to fit in—one starting with each letter of the word. In the spaces below, write an eight-line poem or rap, using each word to start a line. The poems do not need to rhyme, but should be filled with descriptive language. Read poems aloud, or post them on a bulletin board. Illustrate them on the back of this sheet, if you wish, or on another piece of paper.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_

**R** \_\_\_\_\_

**E** \_\_\_\_\_

**S** \_\_\_\_\_

**S** \_\_\_\_\_

**U** \_\_\_\_\_

**R** \_\_\_\_\_

**E** \_\_\_\_\_





# WEEK 3

## THE PRESSURE TO FIT IN

*Much of the anxiety students feel is social: What cliques are cool. What behavior is acceptable or desirable. What is appropriate in relationships. How they approach the challenges and tasks of school. The activities on this page will use the newspaper to explore some different forms of "The Pressure to Fit In."*

### 1. Doing the Right Thing

Teens and pre-teens often feel pressure because friends, parents or others disapprove of their behavior. Have students pair off and scan the sections of the newspaper for several days for every mention of teens or pre-teens. Ask them to tally how many of the mentions were positive and how many were negative. Have them graph the results. Finish by having them write a paragraph explaining how peer pressure, positive or negative, contributed to the behavior written about.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Using oral, written and visual texts to identify and research issues of importance that confront adolescents; organizing data through graphs, charts and tables.*

### 2. Responding to Pressure\*

Ask students to look again at one of the stories that mentioned teens or pre-teens in the newspaper in a negative way. Challenge them to imagine that the youth involved had been pressured by friends to behave the way he/she did. On the "Responding to Pressure" activity sheet, have them state what the youth did, three pressure tactics that might have been used, and three firm, honest and non-violent ways the youth could have resisted the pressure.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Using oral, written and visual texts to identify and research issues of importance that confront adolescents; identifying and explaining how individuals demonstrate good character and personal virtue.*

### 3. Sports Tastes

Tastes in entertainment and sports can be a source of peer pressure for students. Have each student pick a sport listed in the TV listings of the newspaper. Encourage them to pick unusual sports, as well as popular sports. Their challenge is to use peer pressure to get others to watch the show. Ask them to make a list of three arguments they could use. Then have them list other ways they could persuade others. Is their peer pressure positive or negative? Discuss as a class.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Identifying and using writing to formulate and express ideas; utilizing the persuasive power of text.*

### 4. Much to Admire

Have students look through today's paper and find a newsmaker they admire. Ask them to list what qualities that person has that makes him/her admirable to students. Challenge them to think of ways they could get a friend who is having problems to act as this newsmaker does. What kind of arguments would they use? What kinds of support or reinforcement?

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Identifying and explaining how individuals demonstrate good character and personal virtue; utilizing the persuasive power of text.*

### 5. The Opposite Sex

How boys treat girls and how girls treat boys often can be influenced by the need to fit in. A teen or pre-teen boy may treat a girl differently if he is with a group of male friends. A girl may behave differently toward boys if she is with a group of girls. Have students look through the TV listings in today's newspaper and pick three shows they watch regularly. How do the men, women, boys and girls in the shows act toward the opposite sex? Have students pick one male character and one female character and write whether peer pressure affects how each treats the opposite sex.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Explaining how culture might affect women's and men's perceptions; describing and comparing characteristics of gender roles.*

### 6. Photo Pressure

This is an activity to get students to stretch their thinking on how peer pressure may work. Have them pick a photo in the paper that shows more than one person in a peer group. Then have them list as many ways as possible that the people could be exerting pressure on their peers in the photo. Finish by having them rank the pressures from most serious (1) to least.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Responding to visual texts by making connections to students' personal lives and the lives of others; employing multiple strategies to construct meaning.*

# RESPONDING TO PRESSURE

Find a story in the newspaper that mentions teens or pre-teens behaving in a negative way. Imagine that the youth involved has been pressured by friends to behave the way he/she did. In the spaces below explain what the youth did, three pressure tactics might have been used, and three firm, honest and non-violent ways the youth could have resisted the pressure.



## What Was Done:

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## Pressure Tactics

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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## Resisting Pressure Tactics

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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# WEEK 4

## THE OPINIONS

*Students in middle or high school feel pressure about fitting in every day. They also exert pressure every day. Most recognize when it is directed at them. But sometimes they don't recognize when they are pressuring others. A key part of maturing is recognizing when pressure is at work, and recognizing the power, and importance, of peers in your life.*

### 1. Speaking Up

Resisting pressure requires the ability to speak honestly about feelings without anger, emotion or the fear of not fitting in. A simple "I don't feel good about this" can go a long way to deflect pressure from others. Ask students to scan the news stories in the paper to find a quote from a person speaking his/her feelings honestly. Have them write down the quote. Then have them write a sentence stating what was achieved by the person speaking honestly.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Identifying and explaining how individuals demonstrate good character and personal virtue; writing fluently; responding to written and visual texts to make connections to students' personal lives.*

### 2. Fitting In with Others

Your friends come from your peer group. Have students look through the movie ads in today's paper. Ask them to pick an actress and an actor from current movies. Then from the other actresses and actors in the movies today, have them pick three "friends" for each, based on common interests, talents or roles. Ask them to explain each choice to the class.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Employing multiple strategies to construct meaning; describing and using various informational genres and expository text to express ideas; analyzing information from a variety of sources.*

### 3. Differences

Peer pressure often targets people who are different. Have students look at the photos in today's newspaper. In each group photo, have them define what would be the dominant peer group—the largest group of similar people. Then have them pick out the person who least fits in. Finish by having them write a paragraph stating how they feel that person may feel in the group.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Posing questions about life in school or community; gathering and analyzing information to answer the question posed; identifying the benefits and challenges of diversity.*

### 4. Photo Assignment

Photographs are a powerful way to tell stories, or help tell stories, in the newspaper. News photographers are sometimes challenged to take pictures that will help illustrate abstract ideas like "the pressure to fit in." Tell your students that they have just been named photographers for the newspaper. They are to take pictures for a series of stories on such pressure. Have them write or sketch what they would shoot to illustrate peer pressure involving (1.) Fitting In/Cliques, (2.) Dating (3.) Fashion. (4.) Resisting Peer Pressure.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Constructing visual texts to convey meaning; identifying and using aspects of the craft of the illustrator to formulate and express ideas artistically.*

### 5. Crime Watch

Criminal behavior is often the product of pressure from others. And efforts to rehabilitate criminals seek to use pressure from others in a positive way. Have students find a story about a crime involving two or more people in today's newspaper. Ask them to read the story and analyze whether there is evidence of such pressure at work. Ask them to write how pressure might have prevented the crime, or rehabilitate the accused.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Exploring and reflecting on universal themes, including rights and responsibilities, group and individual roles, conflict and change; developing criteria for evaluating texts.*

### 6. A Jury of Your Peers \*

In the American criminal system a person accused of a crime has the right to a trial before a jury of his/her peers. Discuss this principle as a class. Then have students complete the activity sheet "A Jury of Your Peers." The activity asks them to choose a jury first for a person in the news, then for themselves. Discuss their choices as a class.

*STANDARDS/SKILLS: Explaining how conflicts at school or in the community are resolved in ways consistent with democratic values; describing what state and federal courts are expected to do.*

# A Jury of Your Peers

In the American criminal systems if you are accused of a crime you have the right to a trial before "a jury of your peers." Discuss what this means as a class. Then pick a jury for a newsmaker or celebrity in today's newspaper, and a jury for yourself. For the purpose of this activity, your juries will each have six members. Be prepared to explain your choices to the class or in writing.



## A Jury For \_\_\_\_\_ (Newsmaker/Celebrity)

Juror	Explanation
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____

## A Jury For \_\_\_\_\_ (Your Name)

Juror	Explanation
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____

# EXTENSIONS

## FITTING IN

The "Fitting In" supplement and this Teacher Guide have given students a chance to examine issues about fitting in that range from dating and grades to fashions and drugs. Activities have provided a way to use the newspaper to further explore the effects of pressure to fit in. But more can be done. Here are some suggestions for extending the lessons of the "Fitting In" supplement.

### 1. Connect with Older Classes

Students of middle school age often feel they are the first to experience the difficulties and challenges of fitting in. Of course, every class goes through this experience. Arrange to have high school students come to talk about the different kinds of pressure they have experienced. Try to get older students who represent different groups—some athletes, some musicians, some drama students, some vocational students. Ask these students if they would come visit with your class in a roundtable setting at different times through the year.

### 2. Film Festival

Many films have been made about the pressure to fit in or coming-of-age themes. Have students make a master list from a video-store catalog, from their own experiences. Schedule a Fitting In Film Festival at which you would screen videos. Finish each film by having a period of discussion of the issues raised. Encourage students to lead the discussion on films they have chosen or recommended.

### 3. The Power of Art

Stage an exhibit or competition of original student art examining the theme of pressure to fit in. Arrange for prizes from music or video stores to raise interest. Mount the exhibit in hallways, a library or a space in your community. Alert local newspapers and TV stations to this creative approach to the issue, and invite them to "review" the exhibit.

### 4. Peer Library

Create a class or school library of books and magazines that deal with peer pressure. Have students bring in teen magazines, especially, that examine peer issues. Ask students to recommend books or donate magazines they have received at home. Create a "card catalog" type listing of peer issues and the books or periodicals they appeared in.

### 5. Internet Website

With school approval, create a website of resources for students with questions about peer pressure. Have students research web links that could connect with resources that would further explore or explain the issues involved. Set up a chat room where students could discuss peer issues with others using screen names (an adult should supervise the chat room online). With school officials, have students establish the guidelines for participation in the chat room or website.

### 6. Movies and Songs

Encourage students to use music and video technology if they have access to it. Make videos exploring peer pressure situations or film documentaries of real-life situations (you may require parental release forms for real-world filming). Have students compose, record or perform songs or raps expressing their feelings on peer pressure issues. When you have enough, host a talent show for the whole school or community. Video the show for those who want to remember it!

