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THE BECKHAMS ARE THE CELEBRITIES MOST CHILDREN ASPIRE TO BE, AS CELEBRITY CULTURE INCREASES ITS INFLUENCE, SAYS ATL

David and Victoria Beckham are the top two celebrities most pupils model themselves on according to teachers, says an Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) survey.

David Beckham came top of the rankings with 53% of teachers saying their pupils modelled themselves on the footballer. His wife, Victoria, came second according to 30% of respondents.

The Spice Girl is less popular among primary school children, where she fell into sixth place behind David Beckham, David Tennant, Frank Lampard, Daniel Radcliffe and Leona Lewis.

According to 60% of teachers, sports stars are the type of celebrity most pupils aspired to be with David Beckham, Frank Lampard and Lewis Hamilton scoring highly. The second most popular aspiration was to be a pop star (58%) – with the Sugababes and Leona Lewis viewed as role models. However, 37% of teachers said their pupils just wanted to be famous for being famous, and 32% of secondary teachers said pupils modelled themselves on heiress Paris Hilton.

A majority of teachers (70%) said that celebrity culture was having an impact over their pupils' aspirations for the future although 73% felt that this could have both a positive and negative impact.

Julie Gilligan from a primary school in Essex said: "The racism issue raised by celebrity Big Brother created a useful platform for class discussion. On the other hand, I have seen and heard negative emulation of celebrity footballer/pop star language and behaviour in the playground and in school - including disturbingly age-inappropriate 'acts' by young girls in school talent shows."

A secondary teacher from Colchester, Essex said: "I think it encourages underage drinking and anti-social behaviour and most of the media focuses on many of the celebs negative behaviours. Those celebs who are excellent sportsmen or excellent actors are often overlooked and not shown as desirable to kids."

Teachers are particularly concerned about the type of career aspirations this may give their pupils and how this is affecting their progress in school.

Elizabeth Farrar from a primary school, near Scunthorpe said: "Too many of the pupils believe that academic success is unnecessary, because they will be able to access fame and fortune quite easily through a reality TV show. They believe that they are much more likely to achieve financial well-being through celebrity than through progression to higher education and a 'proper' career. Our school is a small village school too, not an urban one."

Robert Sanders from a junior school in Bath said: "One girl said that she wished to be a WAG."

Pupils also try to look like and/or behave like celebrities they admire according to 44% of teachers. Most pupils do this by choosing a similar hair cut, using their catchphrases or dressing the same.

A teacher from a primary school in Oxfordshire said: "Colleagues and I have discussed worries about girls in particular, trying to dress in an unsuitable (i.e. provocative) way on "home clothes" days. Girls do seem more impressionable than boys, especially in their overt attempts to look like their favourite celebrities (e.g. eye make-up, nail varnish, jewellery, big belts, all of which are against school rules). We notice this in younger and younger children."

ATL general secretary, Dr Mary Bousted, said: "We are not surprised about infiltration of celebrity culture in schools – it reflects the current media obsession with celebrity and the effect of celebrity culture on society as a whole. Celebrities can have a positive effect on pupils. They can raise pupils' aspirations and ambitions for the future.

"However, we are deeply concerned that many pupils' believe celebrity status is available to everyone. They do not understand the hard work it takes to achieve such status and do not think it is important to be actively engaged in school work as education is not needed for a celebrity status. Celebrity culture can perpetuate the notion that celebrity status is the greatest achievement and reinforces the belief that other career options are not valuable."

These findings came from a survey of 304 teachers from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, teaching in primary and secondary maintained and independent schools.

For further information please contact the ATL press office on 0207 782 1589 or visit our website www.atl.org.uk.

Note to editors:

1. 304 ATL members working as teachers in primary and secondary independent and maintained schools, sixth form colleges, and further education colleges in the UK were questioned between 8 and 29 February 2008.

Key survey results:

If your students refer to celebrities in class, is it more common today than 5 years ago?	Yes 42.8%	No 30.9%	Don't Know 11.8%	Unable to answer as I have been teaching for less than 5 years. 14.5%	
Where would you say your students' knowledge of celebrities comes from? (Members ticked all that applied)	Television		77.3%		
	Friends/Peer groups		60.9%		
	Newspapers		12.8%		
	Magazines		46.4%		
	Internet		51.3%		
	All of the above		25.7%		
Do you think that a celebrity culture influences your students' aspirations for the future?	Yes 70.1%	No 14.5%	Don't know 15.5%		
What type of influence over your students' aspirations for the future, does celebrity culture have?	Positive 2.3%	Negative 24.3%	Both positive and negative 72.9%		No influence 0.5%
Which type of celebrity do any of your students aspire to be? (Members ticked all that applied)	A Pop Star		57.9%		
	A Film Star		29.3%		
	A Model		32.6%		
	A Sports Star		59.5%		
	A TV Chef		2.6%		
	Anything as long as they are famous		37.2%		

Who do your students model themselves on?					
Celebrity	Overall	Primary	Secondary	Maintained	Independent
David Beckham	52.5%	66.7%	40.3%	62.0%	41.8%
Victoria Beckham - Posh	29.7%	21.7%	36.7%	29.2%	30.3%
Frank Lampard	26.3%	29.2%	23.7%	27.7%	24.6%
Keira Knightly	25.1%	11.7%	36.7%	12.4%	39.3%
David Tennant	23.2%	36.7%	11.5%	28.5%	17.2%
Paris Hilton	22.8%	11.7%	32.4%	20.4%	25.4%
Lewis Hamilton	20.8%	20.8%	20.9%	19.0%	23.0%
Sugababes	20.5%	18.3%	22.3%	19.7%	21.3%
Leona Lewis	20.1%	22.5%	18.0%	24.8%	14.8%
Nadine Coyle (Girls Aloud)	16.6%	16.7%	16.5%	16.1%	17.2%
Lily Allen	15.8%	7.5%	23.0%	12.4%	19.7%
Johnny Depp	15.4%	10.0%	20.1%	17.5%	13.1%
Kelly Holmes	13.5%	10.0%	16.5%	8.0%	19.7%
Daniel Radcliffe (Harry Potter)	13.5%	23.3%	5.0%	16.8%	9.8%
Mischa Barton (The OC)	12.4%	5.0%	18.7%	7.3%	18.0%
Kelly Osbourne	7.3%	4.2%	10.1%	6.6%	8.2%
Russell Brand	7.3%	2.5%	11.5%	5.8%	9.0%
Peaches Geldof	6.2%	0.8%	10.8%	1.5%	11.5%
Danny Jones (McFly)	5.4%	4.2%	6.5%	7.3%	3.3%
Shane Ward	5.4%	5.8%	5.0%	7.3%	3.3%
Jamie Oliver	4.6%	1.7%	7.2%	3.6%	5.7%
Alex Turner (Arctic Monkeys)	4.6%	0.8%	7.9%	3.6%	5.7%
Prince Harry	4.2%	2.5%	5.8%	0.7%	8.2%
Andy Murray	4.2%	3.3%	5.0%	2.2%	6.6%
Alexa Chung (T4 presenter)	4.2%	1.7%	6.5%	3.6%	4.9%
Konnie Huq (Blue Peter)	3.1%	3.3%	2.9%	2.2%	4.1%
Do your students try and look like and/or behave like celebrities the most admire?	Yes 44.1%	No 32.9%	Don't know 23.0%		
How do your students try and look like and/or behave like the celebrities they admire?	Dress similarly		51.0%		
	Wear similar make-up		32.2%		
	Choose a similar hair cut		61.1%		
	Use their catchphrases		51.7%		
	Adopt their mannerisms		44.3%		
	All of the above		17.4%		

- The 2008 ATL annual conference is taking place from 17-20 March at the Riviera International Conference Centre (RICC), Torquay.
- The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) is an independent, registered trade union and professional association, representing approximately 160,000 teachers, headteachers, lecturers and support staff in maintained and independent nurseries, schools, sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges in the United Kingdom.
- ATL exists to help members, as their careers develop, through first rate research, advice, information and legal advice.
- ATL is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). The union is a member of the Social Partnership – working with the UK Government, employers and other unions on education issues. ATL is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.