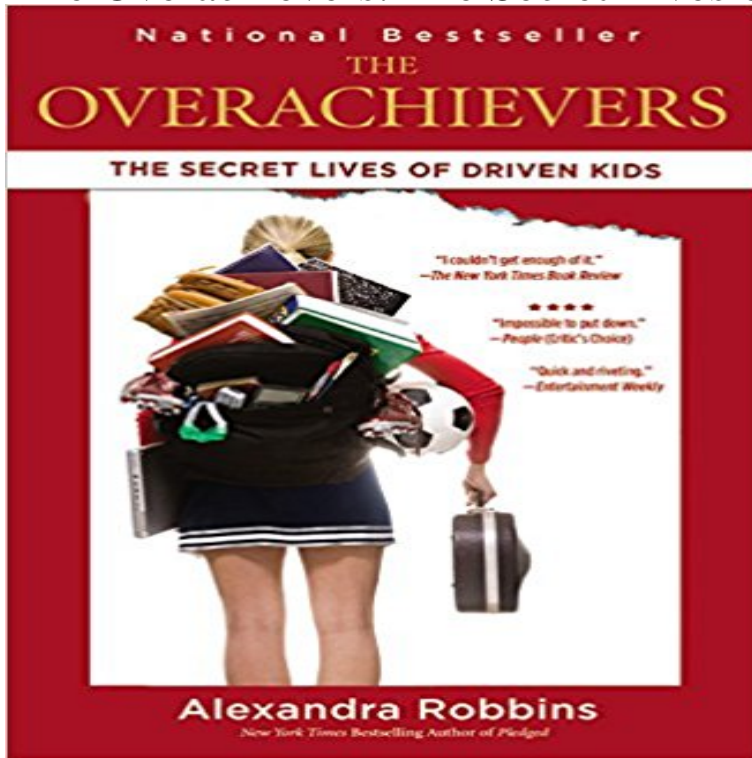


# The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids



You cant just be the smartest. You have to be the most athletic, you have to be able to have the most fun, you have to be the prettiest, the best dressed, the nicest, the most wanted. You have to constantly be out on the town partying, and then you have to get straight As. And most of all, you have to appear to be happy. -- CJ, age seventeen High school isnt what it used to be. With record numbers of students competing fiercely to get into college, schools are no longer primarily places of learning. Theyre dog-eat-dog battlegrounds in which kids must set aside interests and passions in order to strategize over how to game the system. In this increasingly stressful environment, kids arent defined by their character or hunger for knowledge, but by often arbitrary scores and statistics. In *The Overachievers*, journalist Alexandra Robbins delivers a poignant, funny, riveting narrative that explores how our high-stakes educational culture has spiraled out of control. During the year of her ten-year reunion, Robbins returns to her high school, where she follows students, including CJ and others: Julie, a track and academic star who is terrified shes making the wrong choices; AP Frank, who grapples with horrifying parental pressure to succeed; Taylor, a soccer and lacrosse captain whose ambition threatens her popular girl status; Sam, who worries his years of overachieving will be wasted if he doesnt attend a name-brand college; Audrey, who struggles with perfectionism; and The Stealth Overachiever, a

mystery junior who flies under the radar. Robbins tackles hard-hitting issues such as the student and teacher cheating epidemic, over-testing, sports rage, the black market for study drugs, and a college admissions process so cutthroat that some students are driven to depression and suicide because of a B. Even the earliest years of schooling have become insanely competitive, as Robbins learned when she gained unprecedented access into the inner workings of a prestigious Manhattan kindergarten admissions office. A compelling mix of fast-paced storytelling and engrossing investigative journalism, The Overachievers aims both to calm the admissions frenzy and to expose its escalating dangers.

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