Underachievement & the Gifted

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“Underachievement & the Gifted”

Sometimes it's like this.

And sometimes it's like this.

• Defining & describing underachievement
• Causes
• Interventions

Defining Underachievement
Principle #1:
Underachievement can only exist in a paradigm of comparison.

Principle #2:
We have a definition problem.
• test validity
• what are we testing?
• EQ/IQ/EF

• straight A’s?
• elite college admission?
• grades above a certain level?
• no awkward meetings?

Truth: Your child is not this.

Truth: All A’s can be underachievement if we’re looking at different between potential and actual production.
How can you tell?

Are they learning?

AND is that learning useful?

If 50% are doing it, can we really call it underachievement?

How specific do we want the correlation?
How low for how long?

Non-producers: don’t do the daily work, but blow the tests away

Selective producers: school is a buffet

Tests might not show decline because they didn’t show height.

Principle #2:
School success requires far more than cognitive intelligence.

All behavior is complexly determined. No one predictor will ever include all the determinants of a behavioral outcome. We have tended to become preoccupied with scholastic aptitude measures because they do correlate substantially with later achievement.
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But neither our psychological insights nor our statistical evidence give us reason to believe that a scholastic aptitude test measures all of the significant determiners of scholastic achievement.

- Robert Thorndike

Gifted underachievers behave and look more like typical underachievers than they look like gifted achievers.

- Robert Thorndike

- anxious
- aggressive
- socially immature
- lack resilience

- fear of failure/success
- negative attitudes @ school
- antisocial/rebellious
- perfectionistic
• doing only what’s required and no more

• using smarts to avoid - rather than excel - at work

• avoiding opportunities to challenge yourself

Friends, it’s not because they don’t like the teacher.
If you do not address these issues, in the end it will not matter what you do instead.

Fundamental differences in values.

Disorganized teachers are a negative.

peers

LD
McCoch & Siegle (2010, 2013) found:

Factors That Differentiate Underachieving Gifted Students From High-Achieving Gifted Students
D. Betsy McCoch, Del Siegle
First Published April 1, 2003 / Research Article
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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to examine whether gifted achievers and gifted underachievers differ in their general academic self-perceptions, attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, motivation and self-regulation, and goal valuation. The sample consisted of 56 gifted underachievers and 132 gifted achievers from 28 high schools nationwide. Gifted achievers and gifted underachievers differed in their attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, motivation/self-regulation, and goal valuation, but not their academic self-perceptions. In addition, the logistic regression analysis correctly classified over 51% of the sample as either

Unexpected event in a student’s life.

Power and control issues.

Lack of an intellectually stimulating environment & lack of support for students’ interests.
Fixed mindset for intelligence.

Interventions [finally, right?]

KEEP IN MIND: it's all a big guess

KEEP IN MIND: is it causing pain?

KEEP IN MIND: theory guides intervention
Is success a valuable goal?

If so, how can I undo unhelpful habits?

Address any social / emotional needs

Behavioral training for EF issues

Counseling for mental health issues causing distress or family issues needing addressing

instructional

ZPD
avoid excessive boredom

Keep that ceiling nice and high.

Internal Motivation requires:
- autonomy
- mastery
- purpose

Extra-curricular Activities

goal
executive function skills / organization

Four-step EF Sequence

1. Do it for them.

2. Do it with them.

3. Watch them do it.

4. They do it independently.

study skills

They must find motivation beyond school.

"But we must get over the mountain before the children awake," said all the dolls and the toys.

The very little engine looked up and saw the tears in the dolls’ eyes. And she thought of the good little boys and girls on the other side of the mountain who would not have any toys or good food unless she helped.

Then she said, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can." And she hitched herself to the little train.

She tugged and pulled and pulled and tugged and slowly, they moved off.
None of these are guarantees.

If you have appropriate, loving, and unselfish expectations …

AND If the child is receiving any needed services…

AND if you are offering respectful work with an opportunity for autonomy, mastery, and purpose…

AND if you are not a hypocrite…
then even if the child continues to underachieve, you are successful.