

Is your child living up to his or her potential?

An underachieving gifted student is defined as a student who does not achieve in the academic areas at a level consistent with his or her capability.

If you are like most parents, this situation can be extremely frustrating. You know your child is capable and yet they do not seem to be willing. Although there is not a magic wand for underachievement, many researchers have found tools that may aid you in your quest to help your gifted child live up to his or her potential.

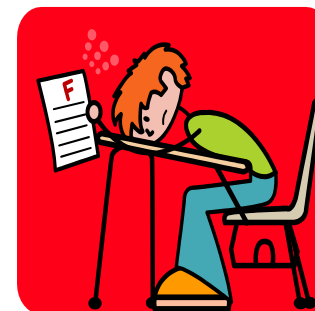
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Underachievement



Understanding the Underachieving Gifted Child

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Understanding the basics to underachievement:

According to James Delisle & Sandra Berger ...

- **Underachievement is a *behavior***, not simply a problem of attitude or work habits. Thankfully, because it is a behavior, it can be changed.
- **Underachievement is content and situation specific.** Gifted students are often successful in outside activities or in at least one school subject.
- **Underachievement is in the eyes of the beholder.** For some, anything above a “C” is a success. For others, only an A is acceptable.

Risk Factors according to Silverman:

- **Disabilities**
- **Low Income and Cultural Diversity**
- **Delinquency**
- **School Environment**
- **Adolescence**
- **Motivation**

Suggestions and Strategies:

- **Identify** underachievement as **quickly** as possible. According to Silverman, it is important to ascertain whether the difficulty is short-term or long-term, school based or home based. Children who have been underachieving for less than a year can be turned around much more quickly than one who has developed a pattern of chronic underachievement for years.
- **Community Service.** Provide a wide variety of opportunities for success, a sense of accomplishment, and a belief in themselves. Students need to be caring and giving about something important to them.
- **Be supportive and willing to listen.**
- **Help set short term and long term goals.** Providing real world experiences in an area of potential career interest may also provide inspiration and motivation toward academic achievement.
- **Encourage** whenever their performance or attitude shifts (even slightly) in a positive directions.
- **Modify School Choices.** A young child may easily become “turned off” if the educational environment is not stimulating. (Possibly consider pressure-free noncompetitive summer activities that provide a wide variety of educational opportunities.)
- **Ask questions, such as:**
 - As a parent, what are my goals and expectations for my child?
 - What are my child’s goals and expectations relative to learning?
 - Are the goals unclear for either?
 - What are the barriers to our respective and collective goals?
 - What is my child’s interest level in this learning task?
 - If goals are different, how can I bring them into concert?
 - If the interest level is not high, how can I increase it?
- **Counseling /support groups** for child, parents, and or family.