

Causes of Underachievement in Gifted Students

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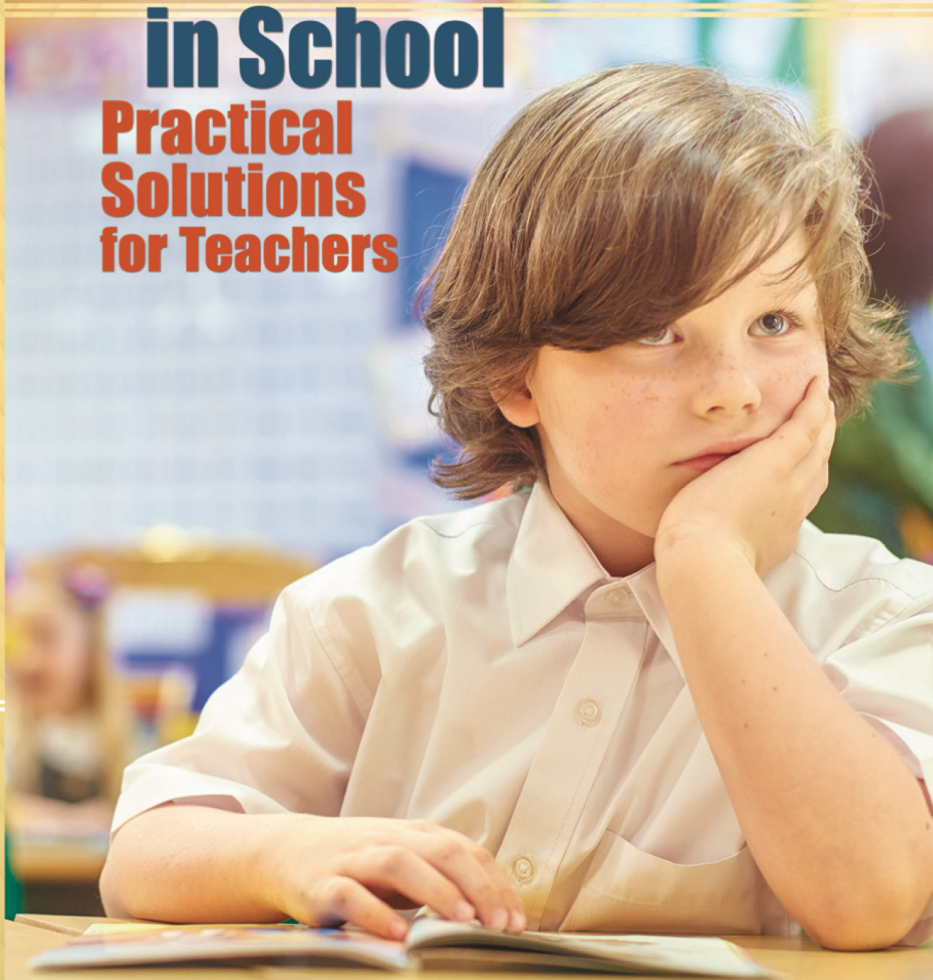
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When Smart Kids Underachieve in School

Practical Solutions for Teachers



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When Smart Kids Underachieve in School: Practical Solutions for Teachers takes a look at the 10 most common reasons why some smart, advanced, and gifted students do not reach their achievement potential. Reasons for underachievement range from social-emotional needs, lack of proper programming, not being challenged, and potential learning disabilities. Each chapter discusses a different cause and three practical strategies that can be used to overcome it. Useful for teachers, counselors, gifted coordinators, and administrators, this book is an easy-to-read, must-have resource for any educator looking to identify, understand, and reverse underachievement.

Todd Stanley is the author of 10 teacher education books including *Project-Based Learning for Gifted Students: A Handbook for the 21st-Century Classroom*. He was a classroom teacher for 18 years and is currently the gifted services coordinator for Pickerington Local School District in Ohio, where he lives with his wife and two daughters.

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Statistics concerning underachievement

- Speculation is that anywhere from 10 to 50% of gifted students suffer from underachievement
- 25% of females could be considered underachieving while 50% of males
- 18-25% of students who drop out of high school have been identified as gifted

College success

- In a study of gifted students, 100% percent of the high achieving students went on to a four-year college
- Only 87% percent of the underachievers moved on
- Out of those students who went on to a four-year college, 83% of the high achievers graduated
- Over half of the underachievers did not (47%)

Long-term effects

- A study of underachieving gifted students 13 years after high school showed that they tended not have the stability in their careers and even their marriages that high achievers did
- Still display the characteristics they did as students such as low self-concept, low perception of abilities, lack of persistence, and the inability to accept responsibility for their actions

What is underachievement?

1. Underachievement as a discrepancy between *potential* achievement and actual achievement.
2. Underachievement as a discrepancy between *predicted* achievement and actual achievement.
3. Underachievement as a failure to develop or use potential.

Diagnosis



Signs of underachievement?

- take "easier" classes to avoid work that would require much effort
- avoid competitive academic activities, such as the debate team or math contests, to evade potentially envious or angry reactions from peers
- refuse to try anything that might lead to failure or rejection, such as auditioning for the lead in the school play.
- procrastinate until the last minute to see how quickly they can write a paper before the deadline.
- take pride in only reading SparkNotes and still getting A's in their AP English class.
- avoid opportunities to challenge themselves when given the chance by teachers or assignments
- gives minimal responses to assignments, enough to answer the question but not enough to probe it at a deeper level

Cause #1

Boredom

- Students not being challenged
- Students having to stay with the class
- Teachers that misinterpret behavior issues for boredom

Strategies

- Pre-Assessment
- Project-Based Learning
- Alternative Assessment

Cause #2

Social/Emotional Needs

- Low frustration tolerance
- Lack of impulse control
- Not willing to take risks

Strategies

- Allowing students to challenge the teacher
- Advisory groups
- Activities that encourage risk-taking

Cause #3

Peers

- Cannot relate to children the same age (peermates vs. agemates)
- Get made fun of for doing well in academics
- Feels bad that is smarter than peers

Strategies

- Magnet programs
- Cluster groups
- Acceleration

Cause #4

Home life

- Parents may not value education
- Parents could have too high an expectation
- Home dynamics

Strategies

- Before or after school enrichment
- Parent education seminars
- Field trips

Cause #5

Twice Exceptional

- Learning disability
- Attention deficit disorder
- Hyperactivity

Strategies

- Teach students how to set realistic short-term goals
- Global learners who prefer visual and tactile-kinesthetic formats for learning success
- Provide specific instruction in organizational techniques

Cause #6

Lack of Intrinsic Motivation

- Goal valuation (degree to which task is important, interesting, and attainable) is also a factor
- Not willing to play the game of school
- Finding the proper carrot

Strategies

- Independent research projects
- Mentorships
- Passion projects

Cause #7

Lack of skills

- Many teachers assume these students already have these skills
- Focus on memorization and not 21st century survival skills

Strategies

- Test taking skills
- Note-taking skills
- Research Skills

Cause #8

Lack of programming/trained teachers

- Might not be gifted programming
- Might not be proper gifted programming
- Teachers may not have skills to teach gifted students (teacher mismatch)

Strategies

- Learning centers
- Differentiation
- Student as teacher

Cause #9

Not challenged

- Solution is often to give them more work
- Have to use Bloom's taxonomy to make it more challenging
- Lack of differentiation

Strategies

- Specialized seminars
- Higher level questioning skills
- Four corners projects

Cause #10

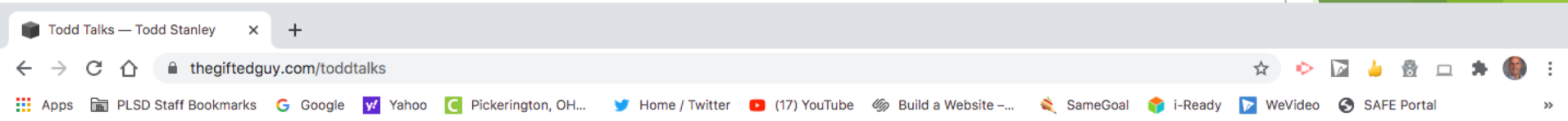
Too smart for own good

- Perfectionism/Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Abstract thinkers cannot translate to concrete answers
- Know how to play the system

Strategies

- Translating abstract to concrete
- Dealing with perfectionism
- Showing them the long term benefit of the lesson

Questions?????



Underachievement



Underachievement

Underachievement - Underachievement is when a student is not working to their potential. This affects 10 to 50% of our gifted students, the ones with the highest potential, and can have long-term affects on their lives. There is no test for underachievement so it is up to the teachers to notice the signs and determine whether a student is underachieving or not.



Goal Valuation

Goal Valuation - The best way to combat student underachievement is to have a good understanding of what goal valuation is. Goal valuation is the value a student puts on three goals to determine whether they are going to achieve at the level they are capable of.



Reversing Underachievement

Strategies for Reversing Underachievement - Once you identify the cause of a student's underachievement, what can you do to help with it? This Todd Talk discusses several strategies that can be used in the classroom to allow students to reach their potential.



The Caring Factor

The Caring Factor - In this Todd Talk I talk about one of the most important things teachers can do to make an impact on their students and that is to show you care. I call this the caring factor and it displays itself not only in academics, but in social/emotional needs as well.