Making a Difference: Addressing Low Motivation in Your Students

• Del Siegle
• University of Connecticut
Earn a Master’s Degree Through On-Campus and On-Line Courses

http://gifted.education.uconn.edu

Summer instructors include
Dr. Joseph Renzulli, Dr. Sally Reis, Dr. Del Siegle, Dr. Susan Baum, and Dr. Jann Leppien
• Up to 50% of gifted students probably underachieve at some time.
• Motivation and underachievement are a major concern of gifted and talented practitioners and parents.
• Underachievement results in missed productivity for society and less satisfaction with life for the individual.
The Underachieving Gifted Child
Recognizing, Understanding, & Reversing Underachievement
Del Siegle, Ph.D.
A CEC-TAG Educational Resource
Prufrock Press
A study of 153 academically gifted underachievers and achievers examined their achievement throughout their secondary school careers (Peterson & Colangelo, 1996).

45% of the students who were underachieving in grade 7 continued to underachieve throughout junior high and high school.
Peterson (2000) conducted a 4 years follow-up after high school graduation. 83% of the achievers and 52% of underachievers finished college in 4 years. Of the high school underachievers who attended college, 41% improved, 44% remained the same, 15% experienced a decline in their academic performance.
In the largest longitudinal study of underachievers conducted to date, McCall, Evahn, and Kratzer (1992) found that 13 years after high school, the educational and occupational status of high school underachievers paralleled their grades in high school, rather than their abilities.
Achievement Orientation Model

Del Siegle and D. Betsy McCoach
Neag School of Education
University of Connecticut

- Possesses Adequate Skills to Perform the Task
- Values the Task or Outcome (Goal Valuation)
- Confident in One’s Ability to Perform the Task (Self-Efficacy)
- Expects to Succeed (Environmental Perceptions)
- Sets Realistic Expectations and Implements Appropriate Strategies to Successfully Complete Goals (Self-Regulation)

CULTURE

- Teachers
- Peers
- Family

Task Engagement and Achievement
Recognize students’ giftedness and their contribution to its growth
Although there are many possible explanations for why one could fail, effort and ability are the most likely causes that students report.

– Good & Brophy
goals
Entity
(Fixed Mindset)

learning/mastery

goals
Incremental
(Growth Mindset)

performance

Carol Dweck
“Nice work.”

“You’ve learned to write supporting sentences in a paragraph that elaborate on the topic sentence.”
Document Growth
Children need encouragement. So if a kid gets an answer right, tell him it was a lucky guess. That way, he develops a good, lucky feeling.
Examine whether low achievement is an attitude issue.
Sample

- 424 students identified as gifted underachievers (9- to 17-years-old).
- 89% of sample between 10- to 14-years old, $M = 12.34$-years-old.
- Approximately two-thirds of sample were male; one-third were female.
- 75% Caucasian, 13% Latino, 4% African-American, and 3% Native American.
- IQ scores ($n = 269$); $M = 131.8$, $SD = 9.5$.  

Siegle, McCoach, & Mann, 2005
Instrumentation

- ADHD-IV Rating Scale (Home Version)
- Two 9-item subscales:
  - Inattention
    - e.g. “Has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities.”
  - Hyperactivity/Impulsivity
    - e.g. “Interrupts or intrudes on others.”
- Reliability estimates:
  - Inattention alpha = .93
  - Hyperactivity/Impulsivity alpha = .89
Instrumentation

- ADHD-IV Rating Scale (School Version)
- Two 9-item subscales:
  - Inattention
    - e.g. “Does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.”
  - Hyperactivity/Impulsivity
    - e.g. “Blurts out answers before questions have been completed.”
- Reliability Estimates:
  - Inattention  alpha = .88
  - Hyperactivity/Impulsivity  alpha = .91
### ADHD IV Home Rating Scales - Parent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>% in GUA Sample</th>
<th>% in Norm Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inattentive</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactive</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ADHD IV School Rating Scales - Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>% in GUA Sample</th>
<th>% in Norm Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inattentive</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactive</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twice-Exceptional

- Many underachievers are inattentive.
- This inattentiveness crosses over home and school environments.
- Are these students who actually suffer from ADHD inattentive type or is inattention a characteristic of underachievers?
- Should we treat the ADHD or the underachievement?
Learn what is meaningful to students
Personally Meaningful

Tied to Student’s Identity

Personally Interesting to the Student

Integral to Student’s Vision of the Future

Viewed as Useful

Connected to Prior Knowledge and Present Experiences

Eccles and Wigfield
The future influences the present as much as the past.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche
Because content is academically challenging does not guarantee that students will find it intellectually stimulating.

- Too little academic challenge, too little intellectual stimulation produces bored students.
- Too much academic challenge, too little intellectual stimulation produces “turned off” students.
- Too much academic challenge with adequate intellectual stimulation produces frustrated students.
- Optimal challenge combined with intellectual stimulation produces students in a state of “flow”.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the term “flow”
The Enrichment Triad Model

Type I
General Exploratory Activities

Type II
Group Training Activities

Type III
Individual & Small Group Investigations of Real Problems

Regular Classroom

Environment in General
Create a reward system when necessary
Underachieving gifted students are more externally oriented than achieving gifted students.

Underachieving gifted males are more externally oriented than underachieving gifted females.

Nongifted students are more externally oriented than achieving gifted students.

Moore, 2006
Introduce appropriate role models
Children's identification with a positive adult role model in their environment is based on three variables...

...nurturance, or the warmth of the relationship between the child and a particular adult

...similarities that children see between themselves and the adult

...the power of the adult as perceived by the child

-- Silvia Rimm
Discuss Options and Making Choices
When faced with a difficult situation, three options present themselves.

1) Modifying one’s behavior to be successful in that environment
2) Changing the environment
3) Find a different environment.

Gifted children who underachieve in school may fail to select options that maximize their likelihood for success. They may cling tenaciously to a strategy that has served them well in the past or in a different situation.
Discuss Options and Cause and Effect Relationships

Did we study the right things?
What was on the test that we didn’t study?”
Create a Supportive Environment
What gifted high school students seek

- control
- choices
- challenge
- complexity
- caring

(Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003).
Five “C’s” for Learning

1: Control
(Self-determination, Power to change the situations)

2: Choice
(Content [tied to interests and the real world], Process
[higher-level thinking, hands-on activities with authentic
materials, quick pace with minimum repetition], and
Environment [flexible attendance and work with peers])

3: Challenge
(Accelerated pace, Deeper, more complex thinking)

4: Complexity
(Craved the unfamiliar [novel, authentic, abstract, open-
ended])

5: Caring
(A caring teacher can overcome the other four C’s)
Help develop self-regulation strategies (and study skills when necessary)
If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them. - Henry David Thoreau
Test Anticipation:
- What **format** will the test be? Multiple choice, short answer, essay, combination?
- How much is the test **worth**?
- How much **time** will you have to write the test?
- Are you allowed to use **notes** or text?
- What **materials** will be needed? Calculator, ruler, pencil?
- Have you **regularly reviewed** the **notes** for the test?
- How much **study time** will you need? When will you study and for how long each time?
- Were **previous tests** similar to this one? Were there quizzes on this material?

Test Taking Strategies

Posttest Analysis:

Greene, Reis, and Schreiber, n.d.
Test Anticipation:

Test Preparation:
- **Spread** your study time over several days and take regular short breaks
- Study difficult or "boring" subjects first
- Schedule study time during your **best time** of day
- Study where you'll be **alert** (not in bed or in easy chairs or sofas where you can get too comfortable).
- **Revise** class and text notes
- Concentrate on remembering the **main ideas** and most important information
- Ask **questions** of yourself; provide yourself with elaborate explanations
- Study with a **partner** to compare notes and test each other
- **Review** main topics and subtopics

Posttest Analysis:

Greene, Reis, and Schreiber, n.d.
Test Taking Strategies

Test Anticipation:

Test Preparation:

Posttest Analysis:

- Did you receive the grade you expected?
- Analyze the missing answers: Were they in your notes? In your text? On a quiz? Did you not provide enough detail?
- Analyze the type of questions: Did you perform better on a certain type of question?
- Did you have enough time to finish the test and to review your answers?
UNHEALTHY PERFECTIONISTS

GAMES

PLAY

• Numbers Game
• Focusing on the Future
• Telescopic Thinking
• Pining Over the Past
• Getting it Right
• All or Nothing
• Mood Swinging
Why People Sometimes Become Perfectionists

- Birth Order
- Messages of the Media
- Generational Inheritance
- Pressure from School and Peers
- Superkid Syndrome
- MA > CA
- Dysfunctional Family
TIPS
To Reduce Unhealthy Perfectionism

Creative Visualization

“Debugging”

“Swiss Cheese”

Bibliotherapy

Creative Outlets
Time Management
Study Skills

Management Strategies

Self-Regulation

Personal Standards

Risk Comfort Level
“Good Enough”
Perfectionism

Self-Monitoring

Distractibility
Delayed Gratification
Performance Avoidance
The Problem

Getting Started (recognizing and seizing opportunities to act and overcoming reluctance to act)

Staying on Track (protecting goal activity from getting derailed by having an if–then plan)
Success Involves

1. Commitment to Goals During Goal-Setting and
2. Effective Planning and Enactment Behaviors During Goal-Striving
1. Imagine the positive outcomes associated with completing the goal.

2. Name critical obstacles.

3. Develop implementation intentions (if -- then --) that results in immediate, effortless unconscious actions to overcome the obstacles.
Fig. 1. Final grade point average (GPA) as a function of ranked quintiles of IQ and self-discipline in Study 2.

Duckworth & Seligman, 2005
The Machiavellian Temptation

By DAVID BROOKS

In the 19th century, there was a hydraulic model of how to be a good person. There are all these torrents of passion flowing through you. Your job, as captain of your soul, is to erect dams to keep these passions in check. Your job is to just say no to sloth, lust, greed, drug use and the other sins.

Sermons could really help. They could help you identify sin. Preachers could exhort you to exercise the willpower you need to ward off temptation.

These days that model is out of fashion. You usually can’t change your behavior by simply resolving to do something. If that were true, New Year’s resolutions would actually work. Knowing isn’t the same as being able to do.

Your willpower is not like a dam that can block the torrent of self-indulgence. It’s more like a muscle, which tires. Moreover, you’re a social being. If everybody around you is overeating, you’ll probably do so, too.

The 19th-century character model was based on an expansive understanding of ourselves, but major changes in the human psyche, including in our ability to change, are beyond our direct control.

Much of our behavior, for example, is guided by unconscious habits. There’s been a lot of research over the past several years about how our habits shape us, and this work is beautifully described in the new book “The Power of Habit,” by Charles Duhigg, a reporter at The Times.

Researchers at Duke University calculated that more than 40 percent of the actions we take are governed by habit, not actual decisions. These can range from what products you buy in the grocery store to a habit of smoking.

For example, in the early 1900s, only 7 percent of Americans owned toothpaste. But Claude Hopkins, who was trying to sell Pepsodent, learned that a harmless film naturally coats teeth. In ads, he told
Teach students to reward themselves with pleasant tasks after completing less pleasant tasks (Grandma’s rule a.k.a. Premack’s Principle)
TIP

Avoid Unnecessary Assistance
Help set realistic expectations.
Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor because “he had no good ideas.” He went on to create Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, the Disney Studios, Disneyland; his greatest dream, EPCOT Center opened in 1982.

Thomas Edison’s teachers called him “too stupid to learn.” He made 3,000 mistakes on his way to inventing the light bulb. Eventually he held 1,093 patents.
Louisa May Alcott was told by an editor that she would never write anything popular. More than a century later, her novels are still being read, and the Children’s Literature Association (an international group of librarians, teachers, authors, and publishers) considers Little Women on the the best American children’s books of the past 200 years.

“CHRISTMAS won’t be Christmas without any presents,” grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.

“It’s so dreadful to be poor!” sighed Meg, looking down at her old dress.

“I don’t think it’s fair for some girls to have plenty of pretty things, and other girls nothing at all,” added little Amy, with an injured sniff.

“We’ve got father and mother and each other,” said Beth contentedly, from her corner.

The four young faces on which the firelight shone brightened at the cheerful words, but darkened again as Jo said sadly,—

“We haven’t got father, and shall not have him for a long time.” She didn’t say “perhaps never,” but each silently added it, thinking of father far away, where the fighting was.

Nobody spoke for a minute; then Meg said in an altered tone,—

“You know the reason mother proposed not having any presents this Christmas was because it is going to be a hard winter for every one; and she thinks we ought not to spend money for pleasure, when our men are suffering so in the army. We can’t do much, but we can make our little sacrifices, and ought to do it gladly. But I am afraid I don’t.” And Meg shook her head, as she thought regretfully of all the pretty things she wanted.

“But I don’t think the little we should spend would do any good. We’ve each got a dollar, and the army wouldn’t be much helped by our giving that. I agree not to expect anything from mother or you, but I do want to buy Undine and Sintram for myself. I’ve wanted it so long.” said Jo, who was a bookworm.
Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs—but he also struck out 1,330 times.

R.H. Macy failed seven times before making it big with his New York store.
Abraham Lincoln started out as a captain at the beginning of the Blackhawk War; by the end of the war, he had been demoted to private.

Failed in business in 1831.
Defeated for Legislature in 1832.
Second failure in business in 1833.
Suffered nervous breakdown in 1836.
Defeated for Speaker in 1838.
Defeated for Elector in 1840.
Defeated for Congress in 1848.
Defeated for Vice President in 1856.
Defeated for Senate in 1858.
Elected President in 1860.
Don’t Give Up…
All of Us Are Works in Progress
Will the real you please stand up?

Submit to pressure from peers and you move down to their level.

Speak up for your own beliefs and you invite them up to your level.

If you move with the crowd you’ll get no further than the crowd.

When 40 million people believe in a dumb idea, it’s still a dumb idea.

Simply swimming with the tide leaves you nowhere.

So if you believe in something that’s good, honest and bright— stand up for it.

Maybe your peers will get smart and drift your way.