



Underachievement is made up of a complex web of behaviors, but it can be reversed by parents and educators who consider the many strengths and talents possessed by the students who wear this label.

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Underachieve ment



**ExCEL
Gifted and
Talented
Program**

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Underachievement

What is underachievement?

Perfectionism can be a trait of the gifted and talented student. Underachievement can be a product of perfectionism. Can it really be possible for a student who is identified as gifted and talented, or even a very bright student, to be considered an underachiever? The answer is yes.

Many times, a child who is a perfectionist can become so apprehensive about an assignment (due to the fear of making a mistake or the assignment not being perfect), that they can decide not to do the assignment at all. This by some educators is the concept of “shutting down.”



When a student “shuts down,” they have lost the ability and/or self-confidence in themselves to produce original, creative and accurate work. This causes the student to choose not to do the assignment or procrastinate about doing the assignment. In their mind, not turning in the assignment is better than turning in an incorrect assignment.

As parents, there are things that you can do to prevent your child from developing underachieving attitudes.

Supportive Strategies:

- Provide your child with a wide variety of opportunities for success, a sense of accomplishment and a belief in themselves. Encourage them to volunteer to help others as an avenue for developing tolerance, empathy, understanding and acceptance of human limitations. Above all, guide them toward activities and goals that reflect their values, interests and needs, not just yours. Finally, reserve some time to have fun, to be silly and share daily activities.
- Gifted students need adults who are willing to listen without comment. When problem solving is appropriate, encourage students to come up with their own answers and criteria for choosing the best solution. Listen carefully. Show genuine enthusiasm about students' observations, interests, activities or

- Be sensitive to problems, but avoid transmitting unrealistic or conflicting expectations and solving problems a student is able to and should be encouraged to see that they can solve on their own.
- Allow your child to see a person recovering from a hard experience. let them see that a tough experience doesn't have to mold that entire person's life. Going through a hard experience can allow a person to learn things about themselves and the world. A lot of times these very experiences will make a person stronger.
- Know what motivates your child. Use things that motivate your child as incentives for completing assignments or a task around the house in a timely fashion. In the beginning, reward them for their efforts until they gain the confidence to complete tasks on their own with success, not “perfection.” Help them learn the intrinsic value of a task completed well. Their success is their reward.