GATE MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELING RESOURCE NEWSLETTER

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Greetings,

This is the December edition of the monthly GATE resource newsletters. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide educators with information, practical ideas, classroom interventions and strategies related to the specific characteristics and social-emotional needs of GT middle school students.

Underachievement

This month's GATE resource topic is Underachievement, one of the toughest issues among gifted students, often beginning in middle school. Underachievement is most commonly defined as the discrepancy between potential/ability (i.e. IQ score) and school performance (i.e. test scores). Below you will find recommended articles, books and websites with strategies and interventions that aim to help reverse underachievement.

Featured Resources (attached):	Recommended Books/Websites:
1. **Reversing the Underachievement of Gifted Middle School Students** (article) 2. **The Unmotivated Student** (article) 3. **Underachieving Gifted Students** (article) 4. **Underachievement Resources**	1. http://www.sylviarimm.com/index.html Dr. Sylvia Rimm's website provides a wealth of articles for parents and teachers on a variety of topics including underachievement. 2. **The Underachieving Gifted Child** by Del Siegle, 2013 - a great book that offers specific strategies to help increase student achievement both for parents and educators 3. **Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades and What You can Do About it** by Dr. Sylvia Rimm,2008 – a book for both parents and educators that provides insight into causes of underachievement, different types of underachievers, and strategies for reversing it.

FEATURES ■

Reversing the Underachievement of Gifted Middle School Students
Lessons From Another Field

Jennifer Ritchotte, PhD[1], Lisa Rubenstein, PhD[2], and Francie Murry, PhD[1]

Abstract: Underachievement often begins in middle school for gifted students. Unfortunately, there is no single intervention that will ameliorate underachievement for all gifted students. To date, interventions aimed at reversing the underachieving behaviors of gifted middle school students have been inconsistent and inconclusive. To create an effective plan to reverse gifted underachievement, the field of gifted education must look closely at the research-based practices of special education. Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA) is a viable way to accomplish this task. A team of individuals invested in the student's success first target the source(s) of the student's underachieving behavior, and then, together, they develop an individualized intervention plan. Although there is no magical cure for underachievement, steps can be taken to help middle school gifted students become achievers. This article will explore who the middle school gifted underachiever is and why he or she may begin to underachieve, review interventions that have been researched for this population, and provide a step-by-step plan for the reversal of gifted underachievement at the middle school level.

Keywords: underachievement, gifted education, at-risk students

> ❝ **REVERSING THE UNDERACHIEVE-MENT BEHAVIORS OF GIFTED STUDENTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL HAS MET LIMITED SUCCESS, INDICATING THE NEED FOR A DIFFERENT DIRECTION.** ❞

Deanna is a gifted seventh grader with a failing average in three of her four core classes. Despite scoring in the 99th percentile on an aptitude test in sixth grade,

Deanna is in danger of repeating the seventh grade. Her teachers met with both Deanna and her parents. At these meetings, they discussed tutoring sessions and potential accountability systems. Her mother mentioned that Deanna's older brother dropped out of high school and worried that Deanna is traveling down the same path. Although they are genuinely concerned, Deanna's teachers are frustrated and ready to give up on her. What other options should the team explore?

Middle school marks a pivotal time for many students. They must navigate the social demands and expectations of their peers, teachers, and parents. They are forced to make decisions and take responsibility for those decisions. Spending time with friends may become a priority over completing schoolwork. Many students who are gifted feel pressure to maintain a certain social appearance that may be counterproductive to the further development of their talents (Compton, 1982; Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005). Poor academic performance in middle school is important to address because of its potential long-term consequences. Eccles (2008) warned, "For a substantial number of America's youth, early adolescence marks the beginning of a downward spiral that eventuates in academic failure [and] school dropout" (p. 1). When gifted students begin to underachieve, it becomes increasingly difficult to break that pattern (Peterson, 2001; Peterson & Colangelo, 1996). Many middle school courses are designed to prepare students for entry into higher-level high school courses, and without a strong middle school foundation, some students may not have the opportunity to succeed in the
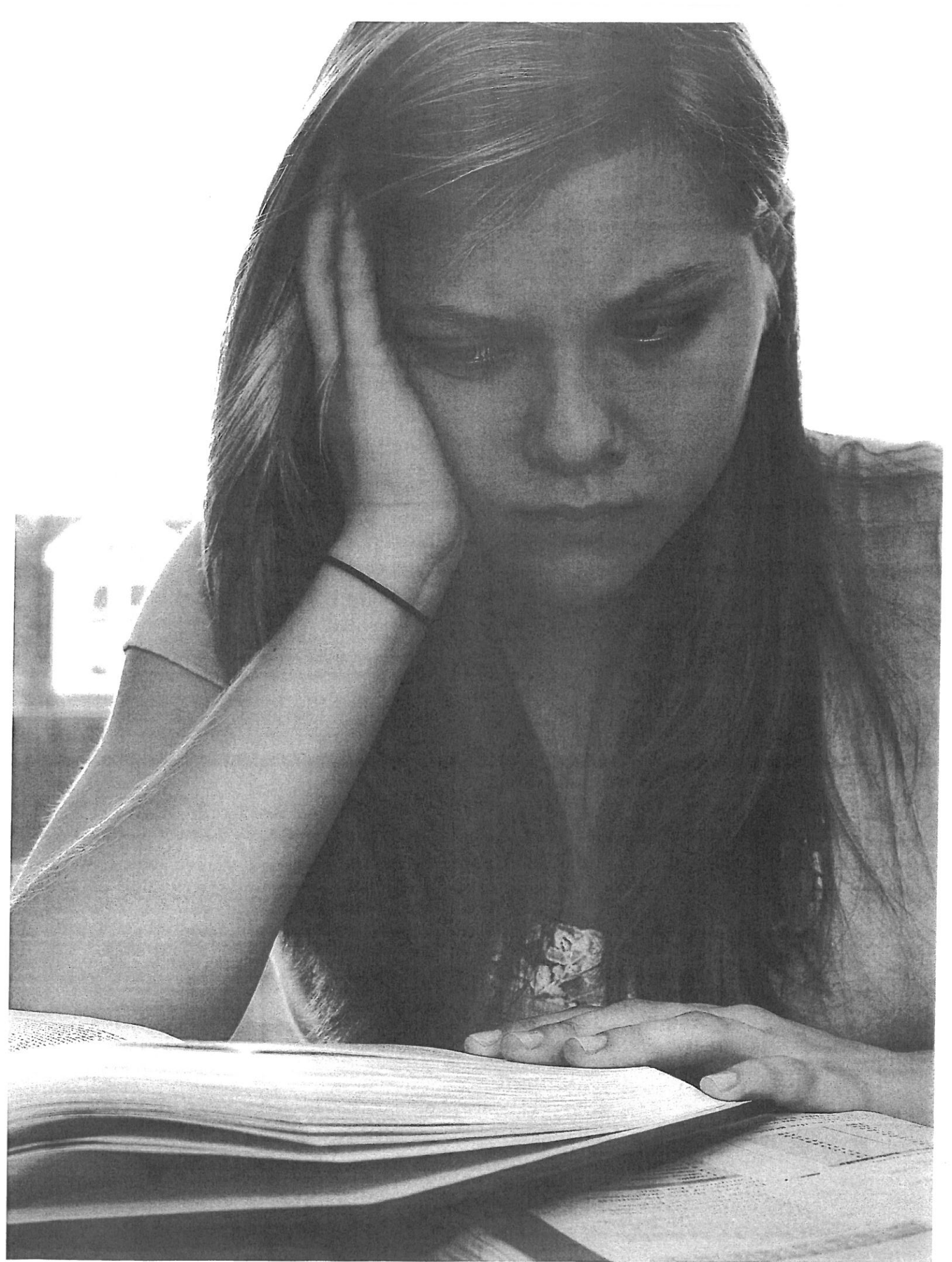
more challenging classes. Underachieving gifted students not only receive lower high school and college grades, but they are more likely to drop out of high school and less likely to experience college and occupational success (Hébert & Reis, 1999; McCall, Evahn, & Kratzer, 1992; Reed, 2004; Reis & Diaz, 1999; Renzulli & Park, 2000, Zabloski & Milacci, 2012).

Underachievement is a complicated phenomenon. Reis and McCoach (2000) define underachievement as the discrepancy between potential and actual performance that persists over time and is not a direct result of a learning disability. Students may underachieve while still meeting grade-level standards for multiple reasons. This may manifest itself as disengagement, disruptive or even combative behavior. When applying the definition to school environments, many questions arise: How large must the discrepancy be to cause concern? For example, if a student in the 99th percentile on an ability assessment is receiving all "B"s, should teachers and parents be worried? How long must the underachievement persist before intervention? Furthermore, after deciding that a student is officially underachieving, what should be done? The purpose of this article is to describe the implementation of a research-based intervention that will address these types of important questions.

To develop a plan for addressing underachievement, teachers, students, and parents must consider the impetus behind the student's poor academic performance. Underachievement is like when a patient complains of a headache; the headaches may occur for a variety of reasons. The patient may be dehydrated, need eyeglasses, or worse, may have a brain tumor. Doctors would never recommend brain surgery for the person who is simply dehydrated, and to avoid that mistake, they would take considerable care in identifying . why the headache was occurring before prescribing the remedy. Identifying why a student is underachieving is similar in that while students' behavior may appear very much the same, there are a myriad of reasons that behaviors are displayed.

Research on Gifted Underachievement in Middle School

Gifted middle school students tend to be more cognitively advanced than their same-aged peers. They often possess a higher mental age than their chronological age. A term used to describe this phenomenon is asynchronous development (Davis, Rimm, & Siegle, 2011). Some researchers believe "this asynchrony has social ramifications [for] gifted students" (Bailey, 2011, p. 209). While the majority of adolescents experience discomfort in middle school, because of intellectual development, gifted students may specifically feel like they do not belong among their same-aged peers. Emotional stress, for example, may manifest in these students due to not experiencing a transitional state between concrete and abstract thinking like many of their peers. Their ability to think at a more abstract and complex level may lead to an earlier search for identity, again setting them apart from their peers (Bailey, 2011).

Underachievement often begins in middle school (Peterson & Colangelo, 1996). It is surprising to teachers who meet underachieving students in middle school that the majority were considered academic achievers during their elementary school years (Peterson, 2001; Zabloski & Milacci, 2012). Lupart and Pyryt (1996) found that the attitudes of gifted underachievers toward school become increasingly negative in middle school and a decline is seen in overall achievement as they progress into Grade 7. In the science and mathematics domains, it is also during middle school where previously achieving female students decline in skill display and outward interest (Brown & Leaper, 2010).

An unchallenging middle school curriculum may intensify gifted students' boredom, leading to academic underachievement (Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003). Conversely, the middle school curriculum may represent a new challenge for gifted students who failed to develop study habits that involved self-regulatory skills in elementary school and now struggle to overcome this unexpected necessity. For example, Diaz (1998) found that middle school gifted students began to underachieve due to the effort and perseverance required for academic success. The inability to successfully triumph when faced with a frustrating or difficult to solve challenge leaves students vulnerable to poor self-efficacy and consequently, underachievement. Commonly, gifted students may begin to question whether they are still "gifted" once they enter middle school, which may in turn produce loss of self-confidence (Compton, 1982; Rayneri, Gerber, & Wiley, 2006).

Research on Reversing Gifted Underachievement in Middle School

Effective interventions to help reverse the trend of underachievement in gifted middle school students have been inconsistent and inconclusive (Rubenstein, Siegle, Reis, McCoach, & Burton, 2012). Unfortunately, there has not been an all-encompassing intervention that would guarantee academic achievement for all students. Most recently, two studies have attempted to systematically develop and implement interventions that targeted gifted middle school students' underachievement. Rubenstein et al. (2012) reported on two separate studies examining different interventions. These studies were designed to consider a single factor leading to the underachievement of individual participants.

The first study used a randomized control experimental design in which middle school students were randomly assigned to either a control group or to an intervention group. The interventions, however, varied depending on the student. The students completed an instrument to assess five factors (i.e., goal valuation, motivation/self-regulation, attitudes toward school, attitudes toward teachers, academic self-concept) that are believed to influence achievement, according to McCoach and Siegle (2003). Results derived from the assessment led to the implementation of an intervention in each individual

participant's greatest area of deficit. The individualized interventions addressed the identified cause of each student's underachievement. For example, the goal valuation intervention used individual student–teacher collaborative conferences to demystify the phenomenon of underachievement, to explain the components of goal valuation, to teach students how to set goals, to self-monitor goals, and to discuss activities that increase the value of specific classes.

Students' grades in reading and mathematics, on average, increased by a full letter grade over the course of the 6- to 9-week intervention period. A second analysis comparing the five different intervention strategies in use revealed a statistically and practically significant increase in students' grades. Of the five interventions, students in the goal valuation and environmental perceptions groups demonstrated the greatest growth in academic grades.

In the second study, Project ATLAS (Autonomous Thinkers Learning as Scholars) was implemented with middle school gifted underachievers focusing on the goal valuation component found successful in the first study. The ATLAS intervention began with students assessing their short- and long-term goals and connecting those goals to school achievement. Then, students learned that educational standards led to curriculum development for their classes, and that there are multiple ways to achieve any given standard. The students discussed how teachers are required to meet these standards, but there is freedom in how they approach the standards. The students then considered a variety of ways in which they might meet the standard. For example, one student decided to teach younger students how to use non-fiction reading strategies as a way to demonstrate her own understanding of those strategies. She designed, proposed, and implemented the project. The overarching goal of the intervention was to provide students more freedom and control in their education. A causal relationship, however, was not found between the intervention and student in-class engagement or student achievement.

Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA) and Gifted Education

Reversing the underachievement behaviors of gifted students in middle school has met limited success, indicating the need for a different direction. Collaboratively, we can borrow from the fields of special and general education in the use of the FBA process, which has been used effectively in general education settings to reduce problem behaviors, such as noncompliance and task avoidance, to increase desired behaviors, such as academic engagement and participation (Lane, Rogers, et al., 2007; Lane, Weisenbach, Little, Phillips, & Wehby, 2007). In special education settings, research examining function-based intervention has demonstrated effectiveness with students with varying levels of disabilities, as well as attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder and those with or at risk of emotional or behavioral disorders (Burke, Hagan-Burke, & Sugai, 2003; Drasgow, Martin, O'Neil, & Yell, 2013; Dunlap, Kern-Dunlap,

Clarke, & Robbins, 1991; Ervin, DuPaul, Kern, & Friman, 1998; Hagan-Burke, Burke, & Sugai, 2007).

The FBA process identifies factors that influence behaviors and is based on the principles of effective problem solving (Steege & Watson, 2008). More specifically, The Technical Assistance Center on Social and Emotional Development define FBA as, "the collection of data, observations, and information to develop a clear understanding of the relationship of events and circumstances that trigger and maintain problem behavior." Specifically in school settings, the FBA can be used to explain, intervene, and redirect academic and social behaviors of any student, and prevent the escalation of educational problems.

The process provides a useful understanding of how behavior relates to educational settings, environments, and in the determination of the factors leading to students' educational difficulties. By knowing how the behavior serves the student (i.e., function), educators are able to develop an intervention that serves that function as well. The focus on identification of the behavioral function should be tempered with understanding that even though student behaviors may look similar, they should not routinely be treated with identical interventions as students do not always desire to achieve the same function. For example, a student may show underachieving behaviors such as not completing seatwork to stop teasing by a peer, whereas another student may display the same behavior to gain approval from a peer group. It follows that given information the teacher would not use the identical intervention for both situations.

Implementing the FBA With an Underachieving Gifted Middle School Student

What follows is a hypothetical example of how the FBA process and creation of an individualized intervention plan would be initiated with Deanna. The reversal of Deanna's underachieving behaviors will require a careful examination of the underlying factors that affect her academic performance. The fundamental premise is that her behavior(s) are learned and can be influenced by consequences that follow, and depending on Deanna's response, the consequences can either increase or decrease the probability that she will continue the behavior(s). Therefore, once Deanna's teachers understand the reasons behind her behaviors, they can develop a targeted, consequential plan. The new consequences can still meet the need Deanna has for displaying the behaviors but now will lead to a more positive academic outcome.

While there are varied, yet similar, procedural models for the FBA completion, we suggest following these basic steps when conducting one: (a) verify the seriousness of the problem, (b) establish a team and define the problem behavior(s) (i.e., the behavior must be defined in measurable, observable, and objective terms so data can be collected) and what the replacement behaviors would be, (c) collect information on the function of the behavior, (d) hypothesize and verify the function (if possible, once the needs are identified, behaviors that would meet those needs while reversing toward achievement should

also be identified), (e) develop and implement an intervention plan that is function-based (i.e., satisfies the needs of the underachieving behavior function(s)), (f) evaluate fidelity in implementation and effectiveness of the intervention plan, and (g) modify as needed.

Step 1

Verifying the seriousness of the problem is essential. In Deanna's case, she has come to the attention of all her teachers, her parents, and herself for failure in the academic arena. The situation appears serious enough to warrant completing an FBA, given that her teachers have already attempted to address the behavior without success. A checklist, similar to one created by Whitmore (1980) may also be used to identify whether an issue with underachievement exists. This particular checklist asks teachers to select common traits associated with underachievement (e.g., poor class test performance). If 10 or more traits are selected, especially those that are asterisked, an issue with underachievement is likely. The teacher should also look for a discrepancy between potential performance (i.e., testing) and actual performance (i.e., grades) as recommended by Reis and McCoach (2000) to confirm that a pattern of underachievement is present.

Step 2

As the need for the FBA becomes clear, a team of individuals who have an investment in Deanna's success will need to help in the identification of the function(s) of the behavior that are leading to her underachievement. For Deanna, the initial team would consist of individuals invested in her improvement and familiar with her school performance (e.g., teacher(s), other support personnel, parent(s), and of course, Deanna). Consideration should be given to significant others in Deanna's life that might be able to add valuable insight, support, and information (e.g., peers or siblings). The members of the team should choose one or two individuals who will take the lead on organization and dissemination of information.

The team will provide a great deal of pre-collection data because of their personal interactions and knowledge of Deanna. The team must identify and define the problem behaviors Deanna is displaying that led to her underachievement. These behaviors are often referred to as target behaviors and must be stated in ways that others can easily know them when they see them, particularly if colleagues are going to collaborate in data collection. It becomes necessary to identify target behaviors and replacement behaviors at the same time; it is common that when a teacher eliminates a target behavior, another unacceptable behavior quickly takes its place unless the teacher simultaneously reinforces an acceptable alternative replacement behavior.

For many students, it is necessary to provide the definition of what the teacher(s) expects to see as a replacement behavior in an example format and, to alleviate any confusion, to also provide what the replacement behavior does not look like (e.g.,

nonexamples). The teacher can use this exercise to hone the definition language of the behavior into observable and measurable terminology. See Table 1 for examples of target, replacement, and nonexample behaviors for Deanna that can be reliably identified, observed, and measured.

Step 3

There are several steps to the data collection necessary to identify the function of the behavior and student need(s) which the team can share responsibility in gathering. It is during these steps that the gifted and talented field can borrow from the special education field, as that field has developed a myriad of methods and tools that provide a nuanced understanding of a student.

Initially, assigned team members should conduct a review of records. Each member of the team may have an idea of what past and current records would be beneficial. Record review could include diagnostic and medical records, psychological information, educational assessments (both state and local), anecdotal records/incident reports/discipline summaries, and her individual learning plan. In addition, identification of previous strategies, motivators, and interest assessments can provide a great deal of insight into a student's growth and developmental changes across time. Beginning with a review of school records helps the team avoid overlooking a lack of necessary skills that may be symptomatic of a learning disability.

Interviewing the individuals in Deanna's daily life provides a picture of the behaviors she displays and possibly her needs. Through listening to these individuals, team members may begin to hypothesize what the function of Deanna's behavior(s) is and what need she is trying to meet. The Functional Analysis Interview Form (O'Neil et al., 1997) may be used to conduct interviews with core teachers and significant people in a student's life. The interview protocol investigates environmental conditions, contextual variables, biological and physiological status, functional replacement behaviors, barriers for achievement, and potential motivators. At the middle school age, youth often tell one another personal feelings and share deep beliefs rather than divulge to adults; therefore, peers may be a good source for interview. Team members who are able to avoid intrusiveness, maintain a caring attitude, and purport a desire to be thorough in creating an ecological picture related to Deanna's academic achievement should be selected as interviewers.

With regard to Deanna, the peer interviews may identify opposition between parents, differing beliefs about parenting, and/or inconsistency in her household. This difference between parent perspectives on child treatment would be a cue that vacillation between leniency and strictness within approaches to parenting exist, which is not unusual in households of underachievers (Rimm & Lowe, 1988; Weiner, 1992). The interview with parents could reveal that Deanna's perspective is accurate and/or could confirm the extent to which her parents are able to support a gifted student who is underachieving or

Table 1. Examples of Target, Replacement, and Nonexample Behaviors

Target behavior	Replacement behavior	Nonexample
Deanna does not begin or complete in class assignments when directed to do so.	Deanna will do work on class assignments when directed to do so with the teacher present.	Deanna doodles in her notebook after the teacher gives assignment directions.
Deanna does not turn in homework at all or in a timely manner.	Deanna will turn in completed homework when due or ask for help when needed to complete homework.	Deanna keeps her completed homework crumpled in her locker.

achieving. Throughout the interviews, which should be thorough but not time intensive, the team members must keep in mind that it is just part of the data, and until all the data are viewed as a whole picture, they do not tell a specific story.

Furthermore, interviews could reveal that Deanna's social identity is tied to her small close peer group; her self-esteem may be partly derived from the value she puts on belonging to this group (Deaux et al., 2007). If members of her peer group are identified as having lower academic performance, they may negatively stereotype students identified as "gifted." Being labeled "gifted" would adversely affect Deanna's membership in her peer group (Schmader, 2002) and, in turn, easily cause her to avoid behaviors that identify her as gifted. Interviews can provide many cues regarding outward behavior or the internal feelings that are rarely verbalized, thus providing leads to hypotheses for the function of behaviors that would not have previously been considered. It is not unusual during interviews to find activities or assignments that teachers may have thought were helpful or even challenging, not to be within the student's range of interest at all.

The team will begin to see patterns from the collection of behavioral interactions. Prior to implementing an intervention, the team should have at least three to five observational periods to establish a representative sampling of the baseline behavior that they have identified. Once the intervention is implemented, they will collect data again to compare the intervention data with the baseline data. This gives documentation that the intervention is effective.

Patterns of behavior and the consequences that sustain or maintain them can be accomplished through direct observational data collection. Direct observations can provide understanding of when and where, and the frequency, latency, and duration of behavior. Observational tools, such as the antecedent, behavior, consequence form (ABC) can help the team identify several patterns of behavior that contribute to academic underachievement. The ABC form allows the notations of the setting, time of day when and the frequency that behavior(s) occurs, what happened just before the behavior (i.e., antecedent), a description of the behavior itself (i.e., behavior), and the consequence of the behavior (i.e., consequence). Put simply, by watching, a pattern may emerge across several settings as seen in the following information: When this occurs . . . the student does X or Y . . . the teacher or peers respond this way . . . The observation does not need to be done over a long period or collected throughout the entire school day, but can be performed in short durations of 5 to 10 min several times during the time frame(s) of most concern. Once the ABC forms have been completed, the team can hypothesize the function of the behaviors observed for the student.

In Figure 1, the sample ABC forms indicate a repeat pattern of behavior on Deanna's part, as well as how the behavior is being maintained and reinforced. The teacher uses ignoring several times through the algebra class without the desired response of Deanna engaging in class as directed. Deanna shows noncompliance with teacher directive. The noncompliance is obvious in the first ABC at the beginning of class. Analyzing that data from that ABC alone, the team could conclude or hypothesize that the function of Deanna's behavior was to escape the class work. With the addition of the second data collection at the end of the Algebra I class, another function could be hypothesized, one of a need for power or control. The function of her behavior may be to control the environment to also avoid a task she finds boring and/or uninteresting. The second ABC form data eliminates possible questions regarding whether the work is too difficult or whether Deanna does not know how to follow directions. It would behoove the team to complete one or two more ABC forms to see whether the hypothesized functions can be confirmed. These observational data are also analyzed with the interview data and previous record reviews to detect an established pattern of behavior. When the teacher uses ignoring misbehavior as an intervention, it serves to maintain and even reinforce Deanna's unengaged and noncompliant behavior. The consequence (or lack of negative or positive consequences) is a reinforcement to continue/increase the behavior(s) she is displaying. The use of ignoring often causes a lack of engagement to continue on the student's behalf (Colvin, 2004), whereas a directive may be all that is needed in the moment. Ultimately, not completing "boring" tasks may lead to unfinished work and poor grades. Wood, Umbreit, Liaupsin, and Gresham (2007) found that lack of challenging

ABC Observation Form

Student _Deanna_ Date and Time: _9:10-9:13am Today_ Context/Activity _Algebra I class_

Time (Begin-End)	Antecedents (What happened right before the behavior?)	Behavior (What did the student do?)	Consequences (What happened as a result of the behavior?)
9:10	Teacher welcomes class and asks everyone to take a seat	D looks around room, chooses a seat	Teacher is looking down at attendance
+30 seconds 9:12	Teacher asks everyone to turn to page 78	D opens notebook and begins drawing	T begins lecture
	Teacher asks class question about graph on page 79	D continues drawing does not look up	T calls on D
		D shrugs shoulders	T calls on next student
+05 seconds			T continues lecture
9:13	T continues lecture	D goes back to drawing	

Student _Deanna_ Date and Time: _9:50-10:05am Today_ Context/Activity _Algebra I class_

Time (Begin-End)	Antecedents (What happened right before the behavior?)	Behavior (What did the student do?)	Consequences (What happened as a result of the behavior?)
9:50	Teacher lectures on slope as a rate of change	D taps pencil on paper, stretches out in desk, looking around room	Teacher continues
9:55	Teacher finishes and gives assignment	D is drawing on notebook paper and continues, does not begin assignment	T comes by D desk and asks her to get to work
9:56	Teacher comes back by D desk	D continues drawing, has not begun assignment	T stops by D desk
+45 seconds	T taps on D notebook drawing	D shrugs shoulders, turns page in notebook, opens math book, and appears to begin assignment	T says nothing and moves around room
9:56:45	T comes back by D to look at progress	D covers notebook with arms	T says "let me see what you have done"
+10 seconds	T again says to D, let me see what you have done	D uncovers notebook and leans back in desk with arms folded	T says "you haven't done anything. You are wasting time – what can I do to help you?"
10:05	T stands by D desk, waits for 5 more seconds and walks away without saying anything more	D shrugs and completes assignment in last 5 minutes of class	T says nothing when assignment is turned in

Figure 1. Examples ABC form showing pattern of behavior for Deanna.
Note. ABC = antecedent, behavior, consequence.

assignments lead to the same outcome, as well as social misbehaviors.

Overall, school personnel should invest heavily in this initial data collection stage, as it should save time when experimenting with interventions. Being thorough in this stage includes consulting with the various teachers each of whom have different approaches when interacting with Deanna. Using record reviews, interviews, direct assessment tools, and observations provide a comprehensive picture of the student,

which will lead to a collective approach at the intervention design stage. Triangulation of sources and data establishes a stronger case for any given intervention.

Step 4

Once the team has collected the data that will give a comprehensive perspective on Deanna's behavior, they will hypothesize the function(s) of that behavior (see Figure 2 for needs and functions that may drive behavior). For example,

Protection	To protect self or others from shame or harm
Escape	To escape a consequence or leave a situation
Avoidance	To avoid an unpleasant task or activity
Power	To be in control of others
Control	To be in control of self, to make predictable
Attention	To be the focus of a situation
Affirmation	To distinguish self from the group
Acceptance	To be acknowledged
Affiliation	To connect or relate to others
Sensory	To stimulate self or reduce pain
Gratification	To enjoy or reward self
Tangible	To get something real or touchable

Figure 2. Possible needs and functions that drive behavior.

when the team considers Deanna, they need to determine why she does not comply with teacher class directives and why she does not complete class and homework assignments. *In examining the function they must remember that nearly all behavior occurs so that the student can obtain or avoid something (e.g., attention, tangible item or activity, or a sensory condition).* The Function of Behavior matrix is helpful when analyzing this data to confirm the hypothesized function. The matrix (see Figure 3 for a matrix example adapted from Umbreit, Ferro, Liaupsin, & Lane, 2007) provides team members with a way to organize the data to identify the primary function(s).

Step 5

After the collection of data, team members should meet to discuss the confirmation of the function(s) or need(s) Deanna wants to satisfy through her behaviors and, in turn, develop an intervention plan. Then the team can design a specialized intervention plan that is function-based. In Deanna's case, her academic performance is influenced by her peer group and the mixed messages she feels her parents are sending. She is not performing well in any of her major classes and appears to be bored, so the replacement behaviors would include an increase of her class engagement that would earn at least a "C" in each of her main courses.

We will assume for Deanna's case that the team had collected enough data to hypothesize and confirm that the functions of her behaviors were (a) to avoid an unpleasant task because assignments are not challenging, which simultaneously leads to her need to avoid appearing "gifted" to her peers, and (b) to control the creation of predictable environments for herself. The primary function for Deanna is avoidance. A strong secondary function is control.

First, the team might consider increasing academic attention from teachers during independent work time. The team could provide the teachers with ways in which to respond to students who are nonresponsive when given a directive or asked a question other than ignoring and moving on. Environmental

redesign could be set in place concerning how teachers in the core classes engage with students who appear nonresponsive in class. Instructional strategies could include more group work and positive class reinforcement for all students to complete homework and in-class independent work. As avoiding the task appeared to be the function of Deanna's off-task behavior, the team could support Deanna by providing her teachers with ways to create more challenging assignments for her while supporting her peer group in their successful completion of work at their level.

Second, as the team considers her peer group in the intervention Deanna may be included in an after school activity in her and her peers' interest area. This would allow Deanna to spend time with some friends who may share her interests. She may also be interested in working with a staff member or teacher to develop a club if one does not already exist in her passion area. Deanna appears to be motivated to address issues of social justice (Siegle, Rubenstein, & Mitchell, 2014), so arranging opportunities to work on meaningful service projects may also provide a supportive peer group.

The other issue that was influencing Deanna was the mixed messages her parents were sending and as a result the lack of control she felt she had over her education. The family may need to work with a counselor to change the manner in which they interact with each other. Part of the intervention plan could include suggesting regular counseling visits with Deanna and her parents. An alternate option could be that the school counselor provides a biweekly or monthly family support group not only for Deanna and her parents but also for any family associated with the school who wish to participate. Potential topics could include consistent parenting strategies and ways to reinforce self-regulation skills when students who are gifted disengage from non-challenging environments or tasks.

Step 6

The success of this plan is based in the fidelity of implementation. Within the intervention design stage, the logistics of the intervention should be clearly delineated. There should be a specific, implementable plan identifying who is responsible for each component (e.g., in class intervention steps, after school club, parent groups). The team must establish who will do what, when, how long, what will happen, a schedule of what data will be collected, how it will be collected, and who will do so.

The evaluation of the intervention should be deliberately planned and scheduled as a part of the initial intervention plan. The schedule should delineate when the team will report progress on Deanna's academic achievement. Without these specific details, it is easy for busy, well-intentioned individuals to not follow through with the intervention plan. Fidelity adherence guards against interventions not being implemented as designed. Fidelity has implications for teachers' claims that interventions are "working" or "not working." Teachers must implement interventions closely aligned to guidelines as outlined; otherwise, they may discard an effective intervention

Function of Behavior Matrix		
	Attain	Avoid
Attention / Affirmation		
Tangibles / Activities / Gratification		
Sensory		
Power / Control	Record Review: D was class leader in grades 1–5. Teacher #3 interview: D volunteers to lead class teams in outside games. Parent interview: (mother) D will not continue in conversations that she cannot sway others to her opinion. She doesn't let anyone know if she cares about her future and will probably dropout of school. Deanna interview: I feel like I should be able to do what I want with my time and I get tired of arguing with my mother about my level of caring for school. Ranking on motivation scale: from 3 of D teachers - Attention averaged the highest ranking ABC analysis: Function found in #2 appears to be Control.	
Protection / Escape / Avoidance	Record Review: D did very well in class participation in grades 1-5. Teacher interview: D does not follow directions, won't do assignments on time or at all without me harassing her. I think she can do the work. Parent interview (father): D spends all her time in her room, on the phone with friends, or escaping into her books. Deanna interview: I don't like it when my friends make me feel stupid because I can answer a question in class. Ranking on behavior rating scale: from 3 of D teachers – Avoidance of tasks averaged the highest rank. ABC analysis: Function found in #1 appears to be avoidance.	
Acceptance / Affiliation		

Figure 3. Partial example of Deanna's function of behavior matrix.
Note. ABC = antecedent, behavior, consequence.

due to inconsistent or incorrect implementation (Gersten et al., 2005). The intervention procedures for Deanna have to be considered by the team members for both accuracy and consistency of intervention implementation to ensure that they are giving their best attempt at the desired results.

After the plan is created and agreed on, it is then implemented for a certain amount of time. It is important to give the intervention enough time to make a difference. One counseling session or one after school meeting will more than likely not be enough time to see academic improvement; however, waiting a full year to assess the efficacy will not allow for the negotiation and the adaptation of an ineffective intervention.

Step 7

Prior and during intervention implementation, the team should reconvene to discuss fidelity and progress made. Deanna should be asked to reflect on whether the selected strategies have helped her achieve in school. Initially, she can keep a journal and meet with the team or a designated team member at the end of every other week to discuss progress.

Several interventions or combinations of interventions may be required to find the appropriate support Deanna. Think of this as an experiment rather than an immediate cure. This is one of the reasons research in this area is challenging. Researchers design and test an intervention, but if that is not the appropriate intervention for the student, the research protocol should be ceased and a new intervention adopted. School personnel should have flexibility in their approach, yet should document any variation as to why they could not follow procedures, and the team should make frequent intervention evaluation a priority to ensure the appropriate match between the intervention and the student. At this point in Deanna's intervention, the team can determine whether the plan is effective by comparing the baseline data they had collected with intervention data they currently have obtained. In addition, they can analyze the intervention data to determine whether Deanna is progressing toward the desired function-based intervention outcome.

Conclusion

Given that academic performance is one of the strongest predictors of students' decisions to drop out of school (Matthews, 2006), waiting until high school to identify underachievers and then attempting to intervene is too late. Interventions designed to increase the achievement of gifted underachievers need to start no later than in middle school. Unfortunately, because underachievement is complex, there will most likely never be a *single* intervention that will reverse the academic underachievement of gifted middle school students. A team of individuals invested in the student's success must first target the source(s) of his or her underachieving behavior (FBA is a viable approach) and then develop an individualized intervention plan. Reversing gifted underachievement in middle

school is not an easy task, but it is more likely with a careful and knowledgeable approach to identifying the function of the behavior, implementing an intervention, evaluating the intervention, and modifying as necessary. Ungifting the gifted underachiever should not be an option (Ritchotte, 2015). Caring and supportive people in students' lives have the opportunity to encourage students like Deanna to make the most of their potential.

Conflict of Interest

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Dr. Ken Shore's Classroom Problem Solver Series

The Unmotivated Student

A motivational problem is not always easy to define, although teachers usually have no trouble recognizing it: The unmotivated student is the one whose attitude toward schoolwork screams, "I don't care!"

The unmotivated student actually is highly motivated when it comes to schoolwork -- he's motivated to avoid it. He puts more work into avoiding academic challenges than he puts into tackling them. Although his test scores often convey high potential, his classroom performance suggests something else. When given an assignment, the unmotivated student will shrug his shoulders and complain, "Why do we have to do this?" He gives up at the first sign of a challenge. He is content with just getting by.

When working with an unmotivated student, you face two challenges. The first is to change his thinking so he comes to believe that, if he puts forth effort, he can be successful with academic tasks. The second is to figure out what *does* motivate him -- to identify the settings, situations, and conditions that he responds to and that can be used to foster his interest.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Interrupt the cycle of failure. An unmotivated student often is a demoralized student. Try to alter his perceptions by orchestrating positive academic experiences. Assign work that gives him a feeling of accomplishment, but that he is capable of completing successfully. Structure the assignment so the beginning is relatively easy, hopefully giving him confidence to move on. If he struggles with a task, focus on what he has done well; gently correct his mistakes without criticizing. Help him understand that setbacks and mistakes are a normal part of the learning process. As he begins to enjoy more success, his confidence will grow and he will become more willing to take risks.

Give a choice of assignments. An unmotivated student often is more likely to put forth effort if he has a say in the assignment. For example, you might allow him to choose from among three assignments -- each of which meets your objective. In studying the Civil War, for example, he might choose to do a book report, an oral presentation, or an art project. (Of course, you reserve the right to require him to do certain essential assignments.) Keep an eye out for other ways to give the student some ownership over the learning process; by having him choose what book he will read or what topic he will write about or what reward or he will receive for reaching a goal.

Incorporate the student's interests into the lesson. Find out some of the student's interests. (You might have him complete an interest inventory.) and try to integrate those interests into your lessons or classroom activities. If the student has a paper route, for example, you might design math problems requiring him to calculate how much he would earn delivering papers under various conditions. If you are doing a transportation unit and the student builds model airplanes, have him bring in some models to show the class. If the student is artistic, invite him to help you design your bulletin boards. If he excels on the computer, have him become the class troubleshooter.

Relate lessons to real life. Students who are unmotivated often want to know "Why do I have to know this?" Help them see how classroom lessons can be applied to life outside the classroom. When teaching shapes, for example, have students point out shapes in the classroom. Show why being able to count is essential when buying things at the store. In a unit on plant life, have students make a leaf collection. Plan field trips that show how their lessons work in real life. For example, plan a trip to a recycling center as part of a unit on the environment.

Break tasks into manageable steps. Some students put forth little effort because they see the task as overwhelming. If that's the case with your student, present the task in small chunks. Give the student one step at a time, and don't move on until he has mastered that step. As the student gains skill and confidence, gradually expand the size of the task, give him more difficult problems, or move at a faster pace. Apply the same approach to homework. If the student struggles with math and rarely completes those homework assignments, consider giving him half the number of problems the other students do; select problems you are confident he can complete.

Expand your teaching style to spark interest. A student who appears to be in the dark when listening to classroom lectures can light up during hands-on activities. For example, you might have students participate in a debate about a controversial historical issue, conduct an experiment to demonstrate a science principle, or do a cooking project to learn about different units of measurement. Those kinds of activities stimulate students' interests *and* help them retain concepts.

Focus on the student's individual progress rather than on his performance in relation to his peers. A student who is compared to classmates who outperform him -- even if his poor performance is due to a lack of effort -- eventually can become discouraged and shut down completely. You can avoid that by focusing on the student's improvement rather than on his performance relative to his classmates. You might evaluate the student through a portfolio assessment in which you examine his work during the year and consider his progress a measure of his performance. The student might receive a confidence boost by seeing how his work has improved over the course of the year.

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ERIC Digests

Underachieving Gifted Students

There is perhaps no situation more frustrating for parents or teachers than living or working with children who do not perform as well academically as their potential indicates they can. These children are labeled as underachievers, yet few people agree on exactly what this term means. At what point does underachievement end and achievement begin? Is a gifted student who is failing mathematics while doing superior work in reading an underachiever? Does underachievement occur suddenly, or is it better defined as a series of poor performances over an extended time period? Certainly, the phenomenon of underachievement is as complex and multifaceted as the children to whom this label has been applied.

DEFINITION OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Early researchers (Raph, Goldberg, and Passow, 1966) and some recent authors (Davis and Rimm, 1989) have defined underachievement in terms of a discrepancy between a child's school performance and some ability index such as an IQ score. These definitions, although seemingly clear and succinct, provide little insight to parents and teachers who wish to address this problem with individual students. A better way to define underachievement is to consider the various components. Underachievement, first and foremost, is a behavior and as such, it can change over time. Often, underachievement is seen as a problem of attitude or work habits. However, neither habits nor attitude can be modified as directly as behaviors. Thus, referring to "underachieving behaviors" pinpoints those aspects of children's lives which they are most able to alter.

Underachievement is content and situation specific. Gifted children who do not succeed in school are often successful in outside activities such as sports, social occasions, and after-school jobs. Even a child who does poorly in most school subjects may display a talent or interest in at least one school subject. Thus, labeling a child as an "underachiever" disregards any positive outcomes or behaviors that child displays. It is better to label the behaviors than the child (e.g., the child is "underachieving in math and language arts" rather than an "underachieving student").

Underachievement is in the eyes of the beholder. For some students (and teachers and parents), as long as a passing grade is attained, there is no underachievement. "After all," this group would say, "A C is an average grade." To others, a grade of B+ could constitute underachievement if the student in question were expected to get an A. Recognizing the idiosyncratic nature of what constitutes success and failure is the first step toward understanding underachieving behaviors in students.

Underachievement is tied intimately to self-concept development. Children who learn to see themselves in terms of failure eventually begin to place self-imposed limits of what is possible. Any academic successes are written off as "flukes," while low grades serve to reinforce negative self-perceptions. This self-deprecating attitude often results in comments such as "Why should I even try? I'm just going to fail anyway.", or "Even if I do succeed, people will say it's because I cheated." The end product is a low self-concept, with students perceiving themselves as weak in academics. Under this assumption, their initiative to change or to accept a challenge is limited.

STRATEGIES TO REVERSE PATTERNS OF UNDERACHIEVEMENT
Luckily, it is easier to reverse patterns of underachieving behavior than it is to define the term underachievement.

Whitmore (1980) describes three types of strategies that she found effective in working with underachieving behaviors in students:

1. *Supportive Strategies.* Classroom techniques and designs that allow students to feel they are part of a "family," versus a "factory," include methods such as holding class meetings to discuss student concerns; designing curriculum activities based on the needs and interests of the children; and allowing students to bypass assignments on subjects in which they have previously shown competency.

2. *Intrinsic Strategies.* These strategies incorporate the idea that students' self-concepts as learners are tied closely to their desire to achieve academically (Purkey and Novak, 1984). Thus, a classroom that invites positive attitudes is likely to encourage achievement. In classrooms of this type, teachers encourage attempts, not just successes; they value student input in creating classroom rules and responsibilities; and they allow students to evaluate their own work before receiving a grade from the teacher.

3. *Remedial Strategies.* Teachers who are effective in reversing underachieving behaviors recognize that students are not perfect--that each child has specific strengths and weaknesses as well as social, emotional and intellectual needs. With remedial strategies, students are given chances to excel in their areas of strength and interest while opportunities are provided in specific areas of learning deficiencies. This remediation is done in a safe environment in which mistakes are considered a part of learning for everyone, including the teacher.

The key to eventual success lies in the willingness of parents and teachers to encourage students whenever their performance or attitude shifts (even slightly) in a positive direction.

PARTICIPATION IN GIFTED PROGRAMS
Students who underachieve in some aspect of school performance, but whose talents exceed the bounds of what is generally covered in the standard curriculum, have a right to an education that matches their potential. To be sure, a program for gifted students may need to alter its structure or content to meet these students' specific learning needs, but this is preferable to denying gifted children access to educational services that are the most accommodating to their abilities.

ROLE OF THE FAMILY
The following are some broad guidelines-representing many viewpoints-for strategies to prevent or reverse underachieving behavior.

Supportive strategies. Gifted children thrive in a mutually respectful, nonauthoritarian, flexible, questioning atmosphere. They need reasonable rules and guidelines, strong support and encouragement, consistently positive feedback, and help to accept some limitations--their own, as well as those of others. Although these principles are appropriate for all children, parents of gifted children, believing that advanced intellectual ability also means advanced social and emotional skills, may allow their children excessive decision-making power before they have the wisdom and experience to handle such responsibility (Rimm, 1986).

Gifted youngsters need adults who are willing to listen to their questions without comment. Some questions merely preface their own opinions, and quick answers prevent them from using adults as a sounding board. When problem solving is appropriate, offer a solution and 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, and goals. Be sensitive to problems, but avoid transmitting unrealistic or conflicting expectations and solving problems a student is capable of managing.

Provide students 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, to share daily activities. Like all youngsters, gifted children need to feel connected to people who are consistently supportive (Webb, Meckstroth, & Tolan, 1982).

Intrinsic Strategies
Whether or not a gifted youngster uses exceptional ability in constructive ways depends, in part, on self-acceptance and self-concept. According to Halsted (1988), "an intellectually gifted child will not be happy [and] complete until he is using intellectual ability at a level approaching full capacity.... It is important that parents and teachers see intellectual development as a requirement for these children, and not merely as an interest, a flair, or a phase they will outgrow" (p. 24).

Providing an early and appropriate educational environment can stimulate an early love for learning. A young, curious student may easily become "turned off" if the educational environment is not stimulating; class placement and teaching approaches are inappropriate; the child experiences ineffective teachers; or assignments are consistently too difficult or too easy. The gifted youngster's ability to define and solve problems in many ways (often described as fluency of innovative ideas or divergent thinking ability) may not be compatible with traditional gifted education programs or specific classroom requirements, in part because many gifted students are identified through achievement test scores (Torrance, 1977). According to Linda Silverman (1989), Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado, a student's learning style can influence academic achievement. She contends that gifted underachievers often have advanced visual-spatial ability but underdeveloped sequencing skills; thus they have difficulty learning such subjects as phonics, spelling, foreign languages and mathematics facts in the way in which these subjects are usually taught (Silverman, 1989). Such students can often can be helped by knowledgeable adults to expand their learning styles, but they also need an environment that is compatible with their preferred ways of learning. Older students can participate in pressure-free, noncompetitive summer activities that provide a wide variety of educational opportunities, including in-depth exploration, hands-on learning, and mentor relationships (Berger, 1989).

Some students are more interested in learning than in working for grades. Such students might spend hours on a project that is unrelated to academic classes and fail to turn in required work. They should be strongly encouraged to pursue their interests, particularly since those interests may lead to career decisions and life-long passions. At the same time, they should be reminded that teachers may be unsympathetic when required work is incomplete. Early career guidance emphasizing creative problem solving, decision making, and setting short- and long-term goals often helps them to complete required assignments, pass high school courses, and plan for college (Berger, 1989). Providing real-world experiences in an area of potential career interest may also provide inspiration and motivation toward academic achievement.

Praise Versus Encouragement
Overemphasis on achievement or outcomes rather than a child's efforts, involvement, and desire to learn about topics of interest is a common parental pitfall. The line between pressure and encouragement is subtle but important. Pressure to perform emphasizes outcomes such as winning awards and getting A's, for which the student is highly praised. Encouragement emphasizes effort, the process used to achieve, steps taken toward accomplishing a goal, and improvement. It leaves appraisal and valuation to the youngster. Underachieving gifted students may be thought of as discouraged individuals who need encouragement but tend to reject praise as artificial or inauthentic (Kaufmann, 1987). Listen carefully to yourself. Tell your children when you are proud of their efforts.

Remedial Strategies
Dinkmeyer and Losoncy (1980) caution parents to avoid discouraging their children by domination, insensitivity, silence, or intimidation. Discouraging comments, such as "If you're so gifted, why did you get a D in ......?" or "I've given you everything; why are you so.......?" are never effective. Constant competition may also lead to underachievement, especially when a child consistently feels like either a winner or a loser. Avoid comparing children with others. Show children how to function in competition and how to recover after losses.
Study-skills courses, time-management classes, or special tutoring may be ineffective if a student is a long-term underachiever. This approach will work only if the student is willing and eager, if the teacher is chosen carefully, and the course is supplemented by additional strategies designed to help the student. On the other hand, special tutoring may help the concerned student who is experiencing short-term academic difficulty. In general, special tutoring for a gifted student is most helpful when the tutor is carefully chosen to match the interests and learning style of the student. Broad-ranged study-skills courses or tutors who do not understand the student may do more harm than good.

CONCLUSION
Some students, particularly those who are highly capable and participate in a variety of activities, appear to be high achievers when learning in a highly structured academic environment, but are at risk of underachieving if they cannot establish priorities, focus on a selected number of activities, and set long-term goals. On the other hand, some students appear to be underachievers but are not uncomfortable or discouraged. They may be quite discontent in middle or secondary school (in part because of the organization and structure), but happy and successful when learning in an environment with a different structural organization. They may handle independence quite well. 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 may wear this label.

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Delisle, J., & Galbraith, J.(1987). THE GIFTED KIDS SURVIVAL GUIDE II. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit. Helps students understand the meaning of giftedness, how to take charge of their own education, how to handle other people's expectations, how to make and keep friends. This book is a sequel to Galbraith, J. (1983), THE GIFTED KIDS SURVIVAL GUIDE (FOR AGES 11-18). Free Spirit Publishing Co., 123 N. Third St., Suite 716, Minneapolis, MN 55401.

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Ellis, D. (1994). BECOMING A MASTER STUDENT (7th ed.). Boston: Houghton-Mifflin. Written primarily for college students, this book provides dynamic ways of teaching study skills, time-management, and goal-setting. Students are encouraged to try innovative approaches to academic and life management skills. Available from Houghton-Mifflin Co., Wayside Road, Burlington, MA 01803.

Galbraith, J. (1984) THE GIFTED KIDS SURVIVAL GUIDE, AGES 10 AND UNDER. Support and practical suggestions for gifted youngsters who are struggling with typical problems such as school work, peer relationships, and community expectations. Free Spirit Publishing Co., 123 N. Third St., Suite 716, Minneapolis, MN 55401.

Halsted, J. W. (1988), GUIDING GIFTED READERS - FROM PRESCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL. Columbus: Ohio Psychology Publishing. A guide to using bibliotherapy and an excellent annotated list of books to use with gifted students.

Harvey, J. & Katz, C. (1986). IF I'M SO SUCCESSFUL, WHY DO I FEEL LIKE A FAKE? THE IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON. New York: Pocket Books.

Heide, F. & Chess, V. (1985). TALES FOR THE PERFECT CHILD. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books. Presents a funny look at what would happen if children were perfect.

Manes, S. (1987). BE A PERFECT PERSON IN JUST THREE DAYS. New York: Bantam/Skylark Books. A student decides that he wants to be perfect and finds a book on the topic.

McDermott, G. (1980). SUN FLIGHT. Soquel, CA: Four Winds Press. Shows students how aiming too high with unrealistic standards can be self-defeating.

McGee-Cooper, A. (1983). TIME MANAGEMENT FOR UNMANAGEABLE PEOPLE. P.O. Box 64784, Dallas, TX 75206. Provides a "right-brain" method for work/study skills and time-management. Suggestions include "reward yourself first and then do your assignments."

ON BEING GIFTED. (1976). New York: Walker and Co. Written by students (ages 15 to 18) who participated in the National Student Symposium on the Education of the Gifted and Talented, this book is an articulate presentation of student concerns such as peer pressure, teacher expectations, and relationships.

Smith, D. (1978). DREAMS AND DRUMMERS. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Publishers. The story of a perfectionist who learns that we cannot always be Number One at everything.

Zadra, D. (1986). MISTAKES ARE GREAT. Mankato, MN: Creative Education. Provides examples of famous mistakes and how they can be turned into positive learning experiences.

Underachievement: Definition, causes, and strategies/questions to consider (National Association of Gifted Children website):

http://nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/achievement-keeping-your-child-challenged/underachievement

More Articles on topic:

http://www.davidsongifted.org/Search-Database/entry/A10094

http://www.davidsongifted.org/Search-Database/entry/A10812

Strategies Presented in The Underachieving Gifted Child, by Del Siegle, Ph.D.:

1. Increase self-efficacy and promote effort through complimenting students on specific skills they have developed. Help students recognize that skills are developed and acquired through effort. Example of what to say: "You did very well on your math and seem to have learned how to solve this equation"
Example of what not to say: "you are so smart" or "good work"
2. Help students understand that achievement is linked to effort. Success comes from effort not luck.
3. Help students create short-term, attainable goals which require effort and a change in work habits. Recognize student efforts with specific comments about progress made.
4. Expectations at home should be created (i.e., homework will be done before other activities).
5. Daily home-school communication at first, to discuss progress student is making after a plan is created at parent-teacher- student conference where expectations are set that include short-term and long-term objectives that guarantee small successes for the student (reinforced by rewards).
6. Role-Model identification / mentor to demonstrate that effort and hard work lead to positive outcomes.
7. Allow students opportunities to explore and pursue interests in school, provide challenging and meaningful tasks.
8. Del Siegle cites "making school more meaningful" as the #1 way to address student underachievement. Challenging curriculum, offer choices, allow child to have some control. Teachers should explain "why" the students are learning something / the importance behind it.
9. Help students feel motivated with opportunities to acknowledge growth: Student portfolios, chart progress, use Dweck's Mindset theory to promote efforts.

Interesting facts Presented in <u>The Underachieving Gifted Child</u>, by Del Siegle, Ph.D:

- GT students who underachieve tend to show a decline in achievement over time on test scores.
- Achievement can be influenced by gender (more common in males), peers, family dynamics, and socio-economics.
- Students who view the environment around them as one that is friendly and reinforcing will more likely demonstrate motivated behaviors.