

GATE MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELING

RESOURCE NEWSLETTER

September, 2017

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Greetings,

This is the September 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 needs of GT middle school students.

The GATE Counseling Department has compiled an MTSS binder of GT strategies and intervention resources available for access by all GATE teachers/staff on the Teacher SharePoint under Gifted and Talented, GATE Teacher Share, MTSS Binder. Most of these monthly newsletter ideas/topics will be from our department's MTSS binder.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is a topic found in almost every book out there about gifted children. Here is one definition of perfectionism cited by Patricia Schuler in the book The Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children, (2002):

"Perfectionism is a combination of thoughts and behaviors generally associated with high standards or expectations for one's own performance."

The literature distinguishes between healthy and unhealthy perfectionism. The healthy perfectionists derive a sense of pleasure from their efforts and feel free to be less precise as the situation permits, while unhealthy perfectionists are unable to feel satisfaction because they think and feel that they never do things good enough.

Here are a few reaction patterns that unhealthy perfectionists exhibit:

- *Fear of failure*
- *Procrastination*
- *Dichotomous thinking*
- *Workaholic tendencies*
- *Worry about the future*
- *Concentration on external rewards*
- *A focus on mistakes*
- *Minimizing accomplishments*

If you recognize any of these patterns in your students, attached you will find specific tips educators and parents can use to help.

References:

Cohen, L. M. & Frydenberg, E. (1996). *Coping for Capable Kids. Strategies for Parents, Teachers, and Students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press

Greenspoon, T. S. (2007). *What to Do When Good Enough Isn't Good Enough*. Golden Valley, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

Neihart, M., Reis, S. M., Robinson, N., M., & Moon, S.M. (2002). *The Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, Inc.

Siegel, D. (2013). *The Underachieving Gifted Child*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, Inc.

<u>Featured Resources (attached):</u>	http://www.sylviarimm.com/article_wwwperfect.html
1. "What Teachers Can Do for Perfectionist Students"	Dr. Sylvia Rimm is a psychologist, author, speaker, and gifted children advocate. This link is to one of her articles entitled "What's Wrong With Perfect?" http://www.nagc.org/ The National Association for Gifted Children website provides pertinent general information about giftedness (a glossary of terms, myths and truths about gifted students, national standards in gifted education), and specific resources for educators and parents.
2. "What Teachers Should Not Do for Perfectionist Students"	
3. "Helping the Perfectionist: For Parents and Teachers"	
4. "Helping the Perfectionist Grow: for Parents and Teachers"	
5. "Trying to Do Well VS Perfectionism" (for students)	

What Teachers Can Do for Perfectionist Students

- ☛ Encourage the process of making or producing something, rather than the result. Ask students to plan their projects in small steps. Don't always correct the finished product. Accept rough notes, sketches or outlines and discuss the quality of the **ideas** behind them.
- ☛ Set some challenges in which the perfectionist has no experience. Encourage them to enjoy something new, just for the fun of it. Make effort the basis for reward.
- ☛ Use class discussion, private diaries or role playing to teach students that:
 - ☛ There are various levels of accomplishment.
 - ☛ Mistakes and risk taking are part of learning.
 - ☛ We simply don't live in a perfect world.
 - ☛ We can all improve with practice—but we'll never be perfect!
- ☛ Make an effort to identify and encourage the students' interests—focus on their personality and their effort rather than their achievements.



What Teachers Should NOT Do for Perfectionist Students

- ✎ DON'T be too lavish with praise—if they show dissatisfaction with a quality project, don't contradict them!
- ✎ Take them seriously and ask:
 - ✎ What particular part don't you like?
 - ✎ How can we improve this area next time?
 - ✎ What parts are you proud of?
- ✎ DON'T put extra pressure on them, and make them feel "different," by using their work as an example to others of perfection.
- ✎ DON'T use "healthy competition" as a way of motivating students.
- ✎ DON'T set up open-ended research projects for the individual and then forget about them! Constant support, and a limit on how much work is expected will work a lot better.
- ✎ DON'T label them as being the best in the class, or introduce them by referring to their abilities. Even flattering nicknames can be hurtful.
- ✎ DON'T be perfectionist yourself, or constantly tell other class members their work doesn't measure up.

Helping the Perfectionist

• For Parents and Teachers •

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| ☞ Don't single out the bright child for special attention. | ☞ Do encourage them to explore their own passions. |
| ☞ Don't ignore a persistent teasing problem and hope it will go away. | ☞ Do allow them to work ahead of their grade level—but be there as a support. |
| ☞ Don't discipline teasing by drawing more attention to the bright child's situation. | ☞ Do recognize that teasing is painful. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, and names hurt me inside ..." |
| ☞ Don't give them the same repetitious work—have something they're interested in for early finishers. | ☞ Do discuss strategies with the child, like answering back or ignoring them. |
| ☞ Don't use bright children as teacher's aides, without asking them. | ☞ Do differentiate between an offhand remark that wasn't meant to be cruel, and persistent teasing. |
| ☞ Don't punish kids for misbehaving when there is nothing interesting to do. | ☞ Do recognize the gifts of all children so they don't feel or appear to be very "different." |
| ☞ Don't teach them topics over and over. | ☞ Do reward creativity, the alternative ways of doing things—not just perfect right answers. |
| ☞ Don't encourage perfectionists to spend hours on headings or perfect handwriting. | ☞ Do ask them what type of things they would rather do, and set realistic goals. |
| | ☞ Do let children fail. |
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Helping the Perfectionist Grow

• For Parents and Teachers •

- ☞ Don't treat academic and non-academic activities as two unrelated extremes! Recognize achievement in all areas.
- ☞ Don't criticize anyone's "passion," or special area of interest—try to get others to share in it instead.
- ☞ Don't force children to participate in things they hate!
- ☞ Don't let study interfere with eating and sleeping.
- ☞ Don't assume bright children always have great study skills.
- ☞ Don't value your subject as being THE most important.
- ☞ Don't approach school staff without discussing things with your child.
- ☞ Don't demand A+ grades all the time.
- ☞ Don't expect children to do everything—study, family outings, sports, helping at home.
- ☞ Do recognize that all gifts are valuable, and point out the gifts of others.
- ☞ Do encourage the joining of popular clubs or activities such as computers, sport and drama.
- ☞ Do select sports teams or work groups yourself sometimes.
- ☞ Do encourage individual differences and unique approaches.
- ☞ Do list priorities and make a plan for the week.
- ☞ Do give enough time for projects.
- ☞ Do ask students about their workload and confer with other staff.
- ☞ Do teach time management and study skills.
- ☞ Do value quality rather than quantity.

Trying to Do Well	vs. Perfectionism
Trying to Do Well	Perfectionism
Doing the research you have to do for a project, working hard on it, turning it in on time, and feeling good about what you learned.	Writing your report over three times, staying up two nights in a row, and handing it in late because you had to get it right (and still feeling bad about your report).
Studying for a test, taking it with confidence, and feeling good about your score of 9 out of 10, or getting a B+ instead of an A.	Cramming at the last minute, taking the test with sweaty palms, and feeling bad about your B+ because a friend got an A.
Choosing to work on group projects because you enjoy learning from different people's experiences and ways of doing things.	Always working alone because no one can do as good a job as you—and you're not about to let anyone else slide by on <i>your</i> A.
Accepting an award with pride, even though your name is misspelled on it. (You know it can be fixed later.)	Being grumpy about the award because the officials didn't get your name right.
Getting together with people who are interesting, likable, and fun to be with.	Refusing to be with people who aren't star athletes, smart, and popular.
Being willing to try new things, even when they're a little scary, and learning from your experiences and mistakes.	Avoiding experiences because you are terrified of making mistakes—especially in public.
Keeping your room cleaner and neater, making your bed more often, and putting your clothes away.	Not being able to leave the room until the bed and room are just so.
Joining a soccer team and playing two or three times a week to have fun and compete with other teams.	Taking lessons as often as you can, practicing every day, and not feeling satisfied until you can beat every other team in your league.