

Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Students

Carol L. Tieso, Ph.D.
Gifted Education
College of William and Mary
cties@wm.edu

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Myths about the Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Students

- Gifted students should be with students their own age.
- Gifted students should be in same-age heterogeneous classes.
- Gifted students should be perfectly well-rounded.
- Being gifted is something you are just born with.
- Everyone is an expert in giftedness.
- Adults know what gifted students experience.
- Being too smart in school is a problem, especially for girls.
- All kids are gifted/no kids are gifted.

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Aspects of Asynchrony

- *Internal:* disparate rates of intellectual, psychomotor, and affective development within the individual.
- *Social:* occurs when children feel out of step with their social context.

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Dabrowski: Theory of Emotional Sensitivity & Overexcitability

- Psychomotor
- Intellectual
- Imaginational
- Sensual
- Emotional

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Underachievers

- Underachievers are students who exhibit a severe discrepancy between expected achievement and actual achievement. To be classified as an underachiever, the discrepancy between expected and actual performance must not be the result of a diagnosed learning disability and must persist over an extended period of time. Gifted underachievers are those who exhibit superior scores on measures of expected achievement.

• (Reis & McCoach, 2000)

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Characteristics of Underachievers

- Low Self-Esteem
- Low personal control over their own lives
- Avoidance Behaviors
- Defensive Behaviors
 - Rebellion against authority
 - expectations of low grades
 - perfectionism

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Characteristics of Underachievers

- deficient academic skills
- poor study habits
- peer acceptance problems
- poor school concentration
- home and school discipline problems

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Underachievement: Family Factors

- Alcoholism (Family or Self)
- Relations with parents
- Relations with siblings
- Inconsistent role models & value systems
- Minimal parental monitoring, guidance and expectations

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Underachievement: School Factors

- Inappropriate & unrewarding curriculum
- Absence of opportunities to develop appropriate work habits
- Negative interactions with teachers
- Negative school environment
- Inflexible schedules or curriculum
- Extrinsic motivation
- Intense competition

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Internal Mediators

- Fear of failure
- Fear of success
- Attribute successes or failures to outside forces
- Negative attitude toward school
- Antisocial or rebellious
- Self-critical or perfectionistic

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Maladaptive Strategies

- Lack goal-directed behavior
- Poor coping skills
- Possess poor self-regulation strategies; low tolerance for frustration; lack perseverance; lack self-control
- Use defense mechanisms

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Positive Attributes

- Intense outside interests;
commitment to self-selected work
- Creative
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity
in rejecting unchallenging
coursework

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Gifted Females

- Underachievement
- Creative productivity
- Male dominance in math and science
- Cultural stereotyping
- Sex roles and mixed messages
- Lack of planning
- Perfection complex/Imposter syndrome
- Concerns about counseling and special
populations

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Gifted Males: Issues

- Image Management
- Self-Inflicted Pressure
- Trauma of being labeled "different"
- Male Bonding
- Cultural Expectations
- Gender Role Conflict
 - (Hebert, 1991)

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Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Gifted Students

- Feelings of being marginalized
 - 1% gay students (2 million)
 - 10% GT (200,000)
- Alienation and Isolation
- Hate and Intolerance
 - Average high school student hears antigay
remark every 7 minutes
 - Teachers intervene about 3% of the time

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GLB Gifted Students: Interventions

- Be informed about GLB youth and
homophobia
- Challenge assumptions about who is normal
- Challenge homophobic language and name
calling
- Express willingness to support GLB youth
- Work to establish policies to protect GLB
youth and provide counseling for youth and
their family members

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Peer Issues

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Reversing Underachievement

- Out-of-school experiences
- Parents
- Development of goals associated with grades
- Teachers
- Changes in selves...

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Reversing Underachievement

- Opportunity to explore interests (Type IIIs)
 - Relationship with teacher
 - Use of self-regulation strategies
 - Opportunity to investigate topics related to underachievement
 - Opportunity to work on an area of interest in a preferred learning style
 - Time to interact with an appropriate peer group

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Interventions: Instructional

- Part-time or full-time special classrooms
 - Smaller teacher-student ratio
 - Address affective education
 - Create student-centered classrooms

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Socio-Emotional Needs of the Gifted: Counseling Strategies

- Affective curriculum implemented by teachers.
- Reading and discussing self-help books.
 - Survival guides
 - Collections of quotations
 - Guides to parenting gifted children
 - Bibliotherapy
 - Cinematherapy
 - Group counseling
 - Differentiated guidance services

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Interventions: Counseling

- Changing personal or family dynamics
- Individual, group, or family
- Is success a desirable goal?
- Weiner (1992)
 - Strengthening deficient reward systems
 - Alleviating cognitive and emotional handicaps
 - Filling educational gaps
 - Modifying passive-aggressive propensities

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Counseling: Internal and Environmental Stressors

- Stress-management techniques
- Counseling by professionals trained to work with gifted students
 - During adolescence
 - Points of transition
- Group, individual, or family counseling
- Family guidance services
 - Assessment of child characteristics: ability, motivation, and personality.
 - Recommendations for meeting individual needs.

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Games Perfectionists Play

- have an all-or-nothing view
- are highly self-critical and preoccupied with their own and others' expectations
- are critical of others
- are highly competitive and constantly compare themselves to others
- experience stress and anxiety...

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Games Perfectionists Play

- set unreasonable, impossible goals
- can't be satisfied with a great result and may be chronically dissatisfied
- have difficulty enjoying the present moment because they are preoccupied with overcoming the next hurdle
- are not risk-takers because they fear *failing*, not being the best and not doing it well enough...

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Games Perfectionists Play

- are afraid of making mistakes
- are afraid of revealing their weaknesses or imperfections
- procrastinate because of their need to do something perfectly
- might spend a lot of time and energy doing something over until it's perfect...

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Games Perfectionists Play

- are prone to depression
- have difficulty in relationships because they expect too much of themselves and others
- feel that their self-worth depends on performance and are sensitive to criticism
- cannot accept that love can be unconditional...

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Games Perfectionists Play

- are compulsive planners
- have difficulty seeing situations, performances and projects in terms other than "good" or "bad"
- are dissatisfied with situations and relationships that are not "ideal"

■ J.S. Peterson (1993)

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Coping with Perfectionism

- Goal-setting sessions to learn to set reasonable goals
- Time management strategies that teach students how to reapportion time by dividing large tasks into manageable parts
- Strategies that teach students to say "no"
- Successes in new areas that could foster "risk-taking"
- Support systems so students can learn to deal with stress and reward themselves for successes

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Coping with Perfectionism

- Allow more time than you think a project will take.
- Set realistic goals but don't set them in stone.
- Start something right now instead of waiting until you're thoroughly prepared.
- Make a conscious effort to realize that your paper, project, etc., can be perfect.
- Begin your day with your most difficult task or the one you least enjoy.
- Plan to have fun without feeling guilty.
- Keep a diary of your progress.
- Remove distractions from your workplace.
- Keep a list of backup projects.

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Multipotentiality

- Gifted children often have several advanced capabilities and may be involved in diverse activities to an almost frantic degree. Though seldom a problem for the child, this may create problems for the family, as well as quandaries when decisions must be made about career selection.

■ Barbara Kerr, (1985; 1991)

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Multipotentiality: Impact

- Early career decision
- Low self-esteem
- Academic indecision; narrow focus
- Leisure-time indecision
- Conflict between cognitive readiness and emotional underdevelopment
- Overall uncertainty
- Need for new experiences

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Multipotentiality: Recommendations

- Provide opportunities for self-exploration
 - Provide opportunities to pursue various careers
 - Establish encouraging and realistic atmosphere; learning environment
 - Allow students to specialize
 - Allow students to engage in futures thinking or similar activities
 - Train students in decision-making strategies and flexible thinking skills
 - Provide opportunities to meet adult mentors and role models

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Stress

- Nervousness
- Excessive daydreaming
- Apathy
- Laziness
- Withdrawal
- Chemical abuse
- Truancy
- Vandalism
- Hostility
- Suicidal Thoughts

■ Galbraith and Delisle, 1996

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Gifted Students and Suicide: Risk Factors

- Unusual sensitivities
- Perfectionism
- Isolationism related to extreme introversion
- Overexcitabilities
- Societal mediocrity: feelings of inferiority

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Gifted Students and Suicide: Warning Signs

- Lack of friendships
- Self-deprecation
- Sudden shift in school performance
- Total absorption in schoolwork
- Frequent mood shifts

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Suicide Prevention Interventions

- Positive school climate
 - Education
 - Identification and referral of students at-risk
 - Creating a supportive school environment
 - Maintaining good relationships with community gatekeepers and parents
 - School classes dealing with suicide
- Psychological services and increased assistance from outside agencies

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