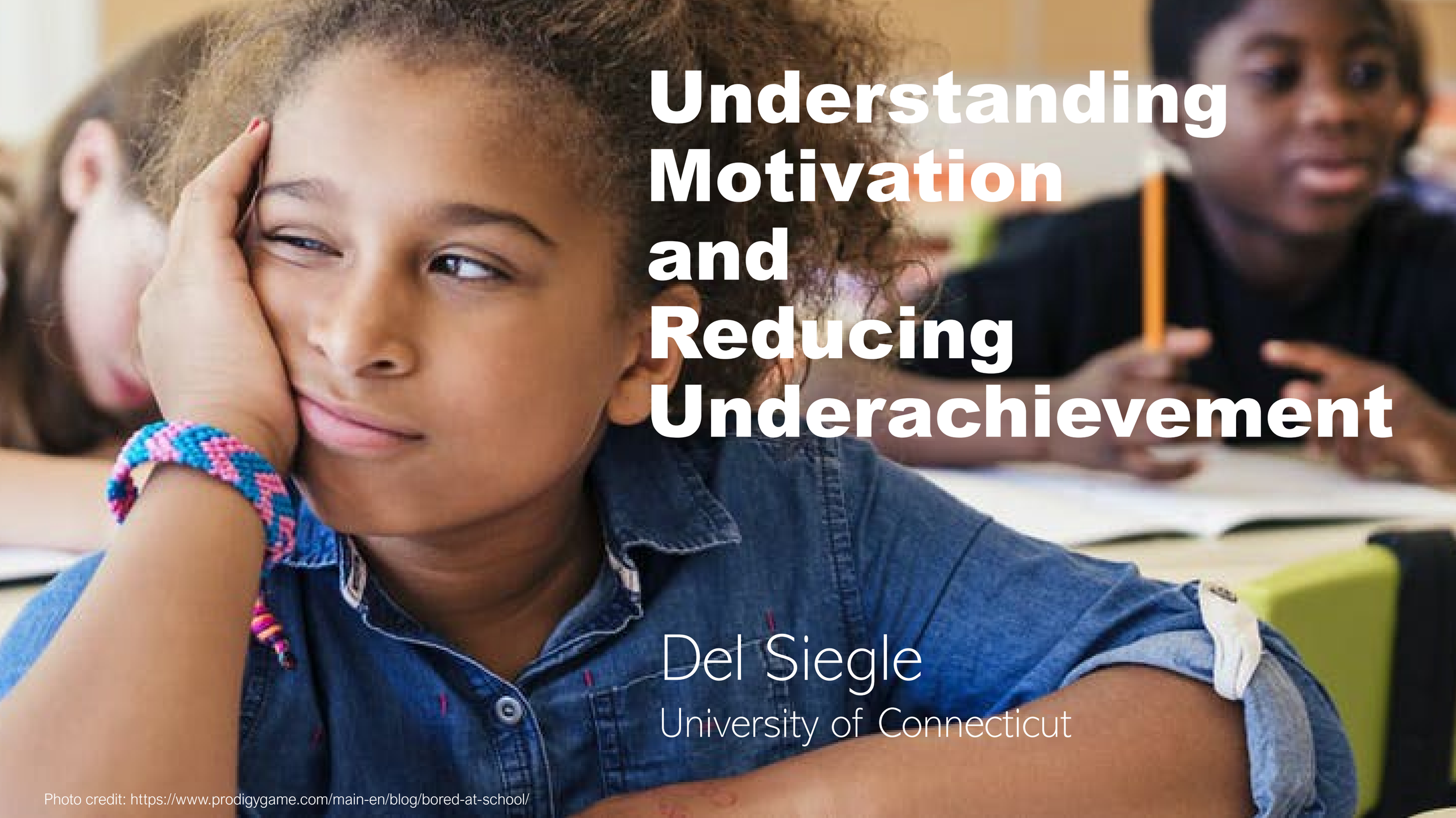
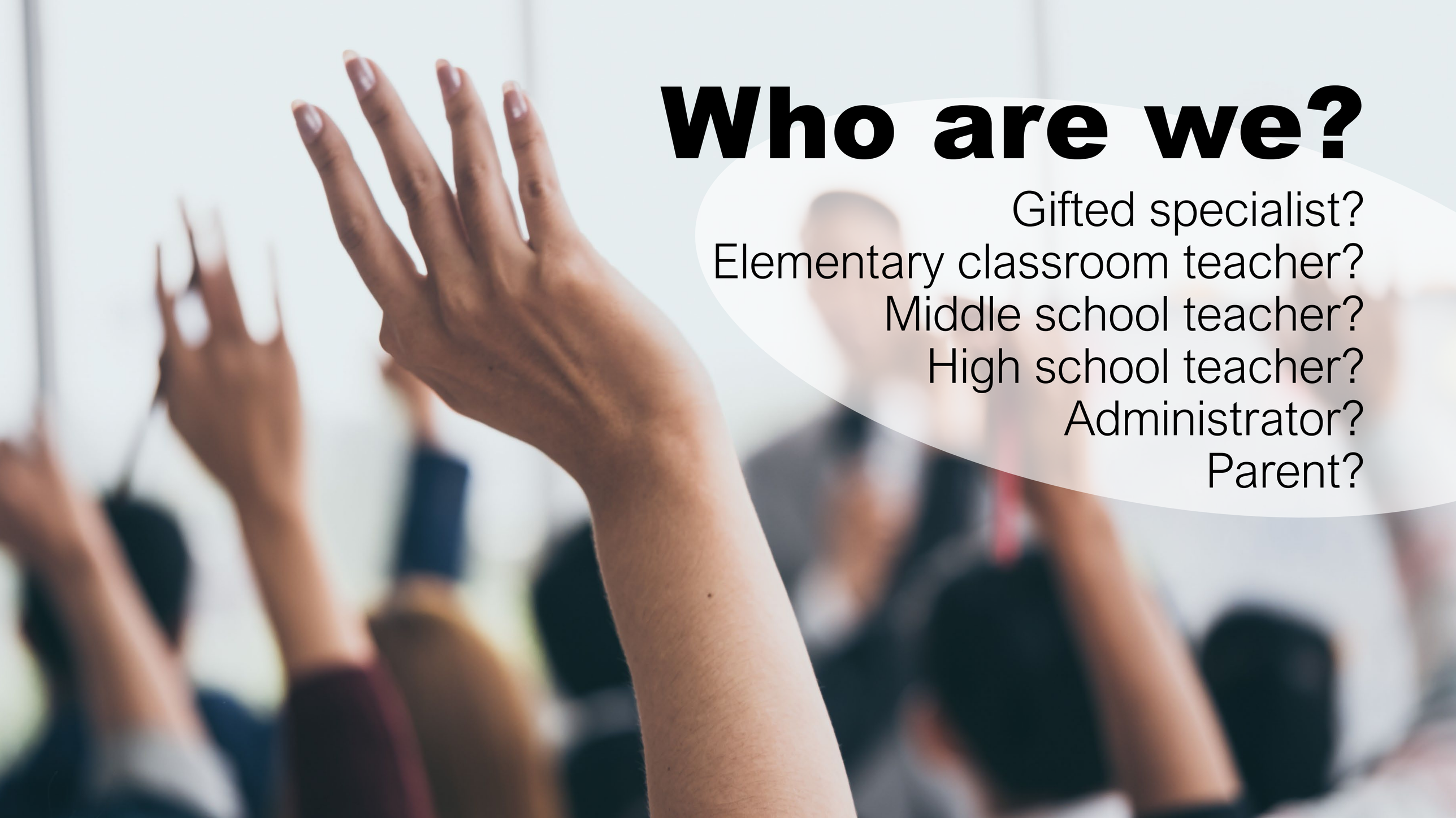


Understanding Motivation and Reducing Underachievement

Del Siegle
University of Connecticut

Photo credit: https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/bored-at-school/



Who are we?

Gifted specialist?
Elementary classroom teacher?
Middle school teacher?
High school teacher?
Administrator?
Parent?

Why might a student not be motivated?

What about being gifted might causes a student to not be motivated?

Maladaptive Competence Beliefs Pathway
1) identity tied to their gifted label
and
2) identity tied to easy early achievement
…so self-handicap to protect their gifted identity.
© Jenny Allen

Maladaptive Competence Beliefs Pathway

1) identity tied to their gifted label

and

2) identity tied to easy early achievement

…so self-handicap to protect their gifted identity.

Declining Value Beliefs Pathway

1) insufficient challenge in school work

and

2) fail to see value in academic work

…so don't connect effort and positive outcomes

(Snyder & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2013)

© Jenny Allen

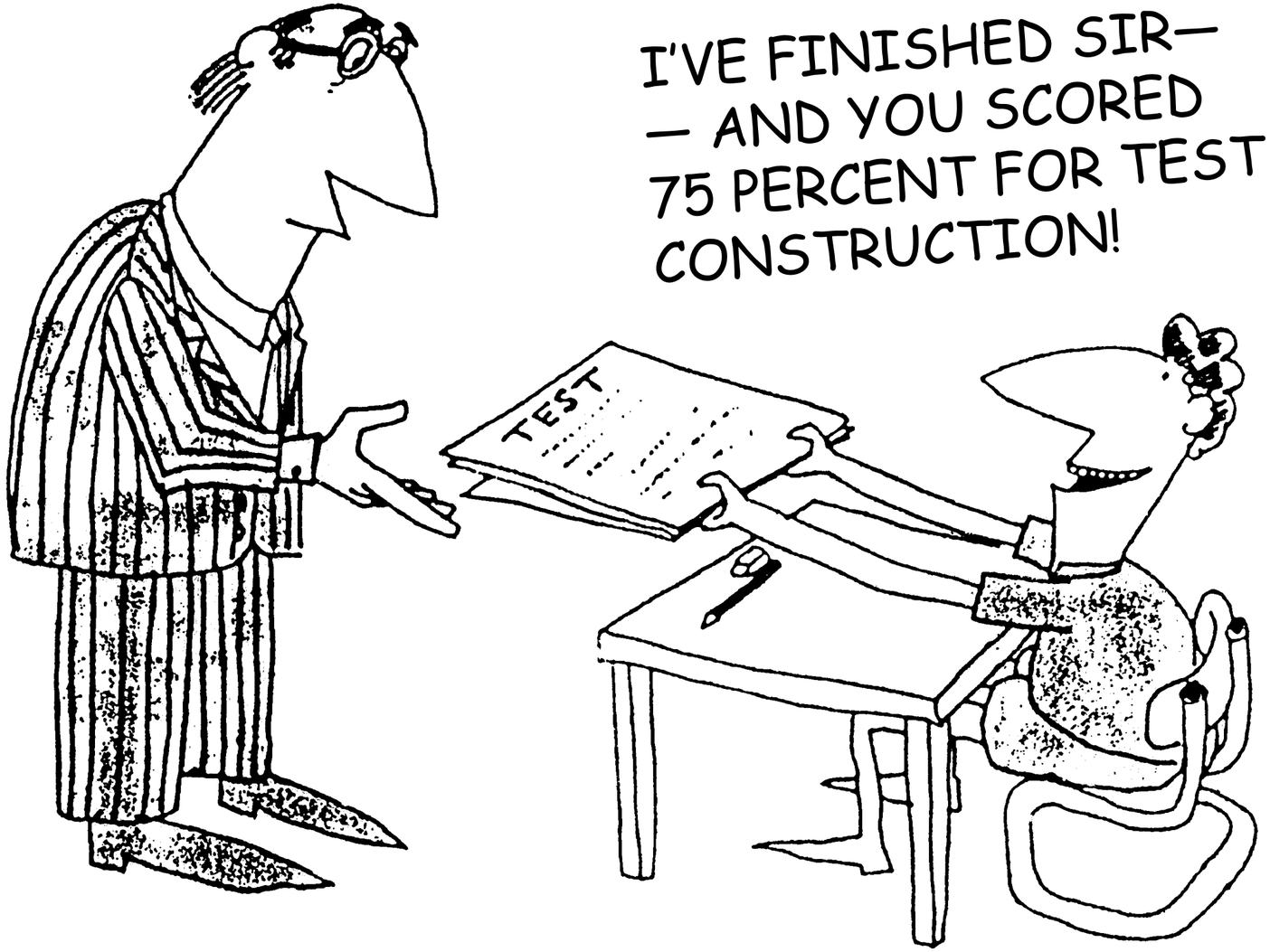
Motivation issues that might arise from being gifted...

identity becomes tied to achievement and the gifted label
- need to be perfect
- fear of failure
- imposter phenomenon

experience asynchrony with peers
- esoteric interests
- boredom and possible underachievement
- asynchrony of skills

Most
interventions
for
underachievement
involve some
form of
counseling
and/or
curriculum
modifications.

…being gifted is a good thing!



…and it can be quite fun.

Motivation issues that might arise from being gifted

identity becomes tied to achievement and the gifted label

- need to be perfect
- fear of failure
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experience asynchrony with peers

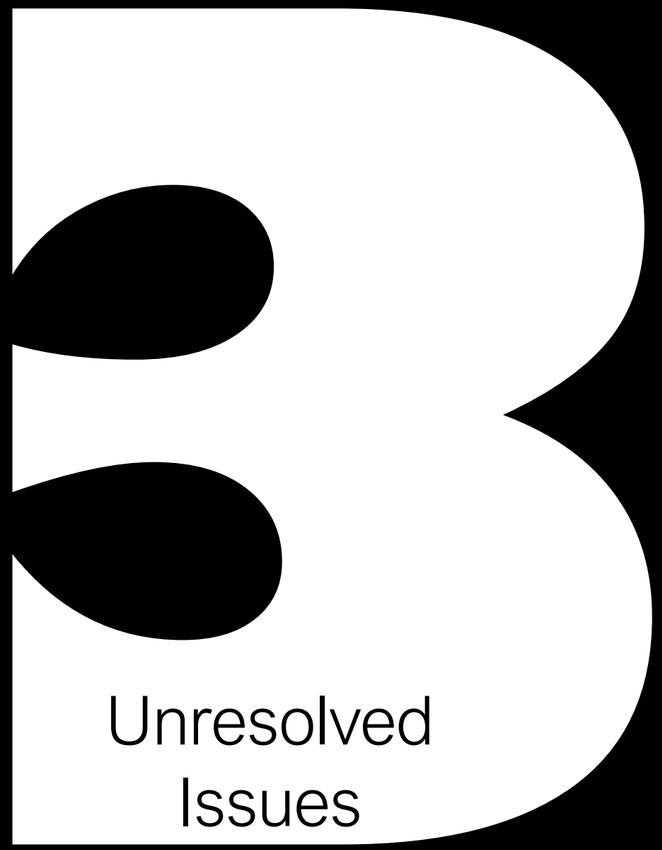
- esoteric interests
- boredom and possible underachievement
- asynchrony of skills

Perfectionism

Are gifted students more perfectionistic?

Can there be healthy perfectionism?

Is it perfectionism or need for control?



Perfectionists

Types of Perfectionists

Gordon L. Flett

1: Self-Oriented

(Originate from within the individual – Personality, Parents, and School Curriculum)

Paul L. Hewitt

2: Socially Prescribed

(Others place high standards – Love and Acceptance Contingent upon Achievement & Inappropriately Easy Curriculum)

3: Other Oriented

(Perfection expectations of others)

Perfectionists

Perfectionists
Perfectionists

Perfectionists
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Perfectionists

Why do children sometimes become perfectionists?

Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists

- Birth order
- Generational inheritance / modeling
- Superkid syndrome
- Messages of the media
- Built that way
- Dysfunctional family

Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists
Perfectionists

GAMES PERFECTIONISTS PLAY

- Numbers Game
- Focusing on the Future
- Telescopic Thinking
- Pining Over the Past
- Getting it Right
- All or Nothing
- Mood Swinging

Tips for Addressing Perfectionism

- Support nonevaluative activities
- Acknowledge and appreciate growth
- Do not tie personal value to giftedness
- Introduce bibliotherapy
- Break tasks into smaller parts
- Teach debugging
- Be a role model

HOW MUCH OF A PERFECTIONIST ARE YOU?

How much of a perfectionist are you? This exercise can help you find out. Read each statement, then rate each one according to whether you **strongly agree** (**+2**), **agree somewhat** (**+1**), **can't decide** (**0**), **disagree somewhat** (**-1**), or **strongly disagree** (**-2**). Answer with your first thought to get the truest response.

_____ 1. I'm critical of people who don't live up to my expectations.
_____ 2. I get upset if I don't finish something I start.
_____ 3. I do things precisely down to the very last detail.
_____ 4. I argue about test scores I don't agree with, even when they won't affect my final grade.
_____ 5. After I finish something I often feel dissatisfied.
_____ 6. I feel guilty when I don't achieve something I set out to do.
_____ 7. When a teacher hands back one of my papers, I look for mistakes before looking for right answers or positive comments.
_____ 8. I compare my test scores with those of other good students in my class.
_____ 9. It's hard for me to laugh at my own mistakes.
_____ 10. If I don't like the way I've done something, I start over and keep at it until I get it right.

Between +15 and +20, You're too Good to be True

Maybe you're exaggerating your capabilities and skills. And maybe you're used to exaggerating them because people have always expected you to be perfect.

Between +10 and +14, You're too Good for Your Own Good

You're trying too hard—and it's time to ask yourself why.

Between +5 and +9, You're a Borderline Perfectionist

Certain events in your life may push you over the line into Full-Fledged Perfectionism, but you usually manage to roll with the punches without going to extremes.

Between +1 and +4, You're a Healthy Pursuer of Excellence

You enjoy doing well, but you can turn your pursuit of excellence on and off at will (in other words, *you* drive *it*, not the other way around).

Between 0 and -5, You're Used to Hanging Loose

Maybe you've made a conscious effort to be less perfectionist, or maybe you were born knowing how to relax and take it easy.

Between -6 and -10, You're a Little TOO Relaxed

You're trying too hard—and it's time to ask yourself why.

Between -11 and -20, You're Barely Breathing.

Maybe you're exxaggerating your own coolness. Read through the statements again, you can't be apathetic about everything.

“Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best.”
-Henry Van Dyke

Motivation issues that might arise from being gifted

identity becomes tied to achievement and the gifted label

- ~~need to be perfect~~
- fear of failure
- ~~imposter phenomenon~~

experience asynchrony with peers

- esoteric interests
- boredom and possible underachievement
- asynchrony of skills

Mistakes are the portals of discovery

- James Joyce

Mistakes are part of the wonderful adventure of learning and growing.

model

model

model

mistakes are simply
unplanned adventures

Failed in business in 1831.

Defeated for Legislature in 1832.

Second failure in business in 1833.

Suffered nervous breakdown in 1836.

Defeated for Speaker in 1838.

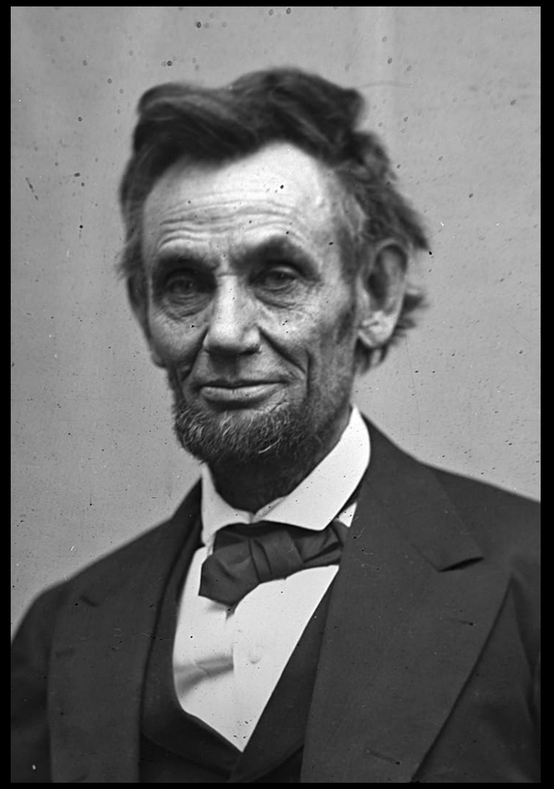
Defeated for Elector in 1840.

Defeated for Congress in 1848.

Defeated for Vice President in 1856.

Defeated for Senate in 1858.

Elected President in 1860.



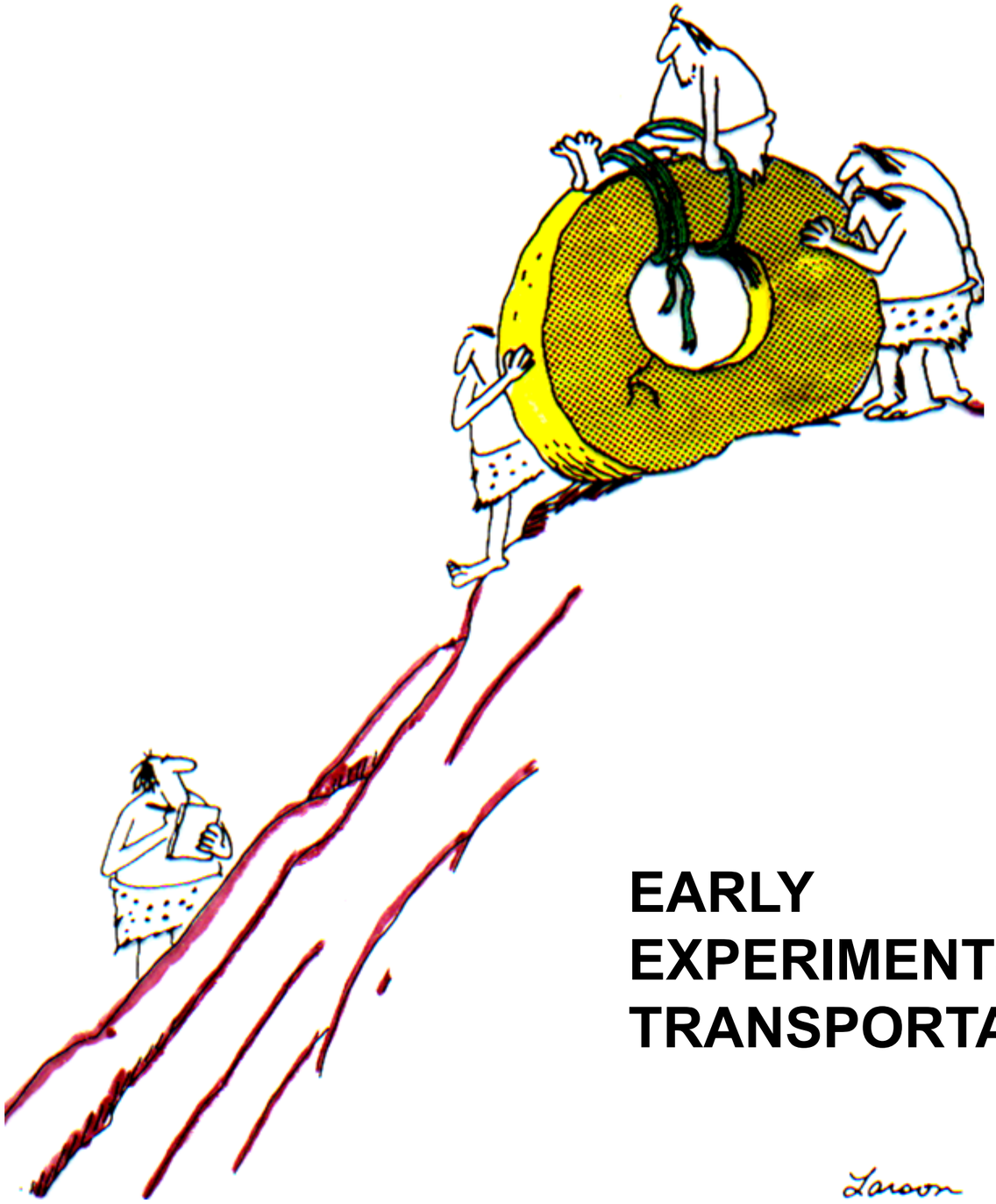
Abraham Lincoln started out as a captain at the beginning of the Blackhawk War; by the end of the war, he had been demoted to private.

“If you want to succeed, double your failure rate.”

-Thomas J. Watson

“I kind of start living by the motto of I’d rather enjoy than spend every single minute being afraid of losing it.”

Taylor Swift



EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN TRANSPORTATION

"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.“

Wayne Gretzky

- See mistakes as unplanned adventures
- Minimize consequences of plans gone awry
- See mistakes as fixable and learning opportunities
- Play out worst-case scenarios

Strategies to address fear of failure

Motivation issues that might arise from being gifted

identity becomes tied to achievement and the gifted label

need to be perfect

~~fear of failure~~

imposter phenomenon

experience asynchrony with peers

esoteric interests

boredom and possible underachievement

asynchrony of skills

“…she really didn’t like it.”

Happy
Birthday

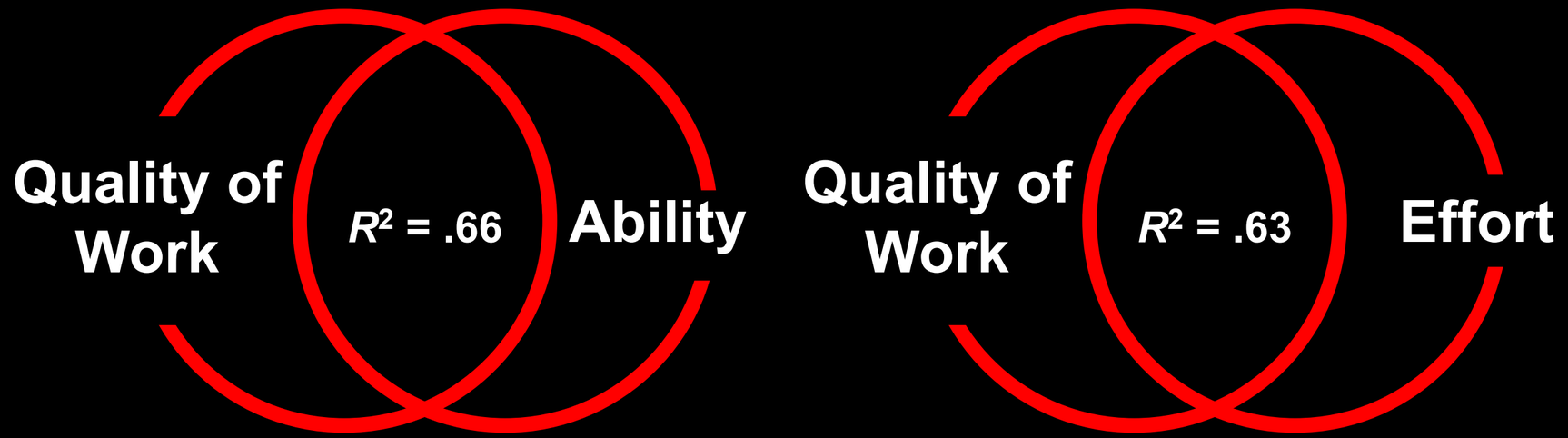
WELCOME

Each of us is unique.
We are a once in all of history event.

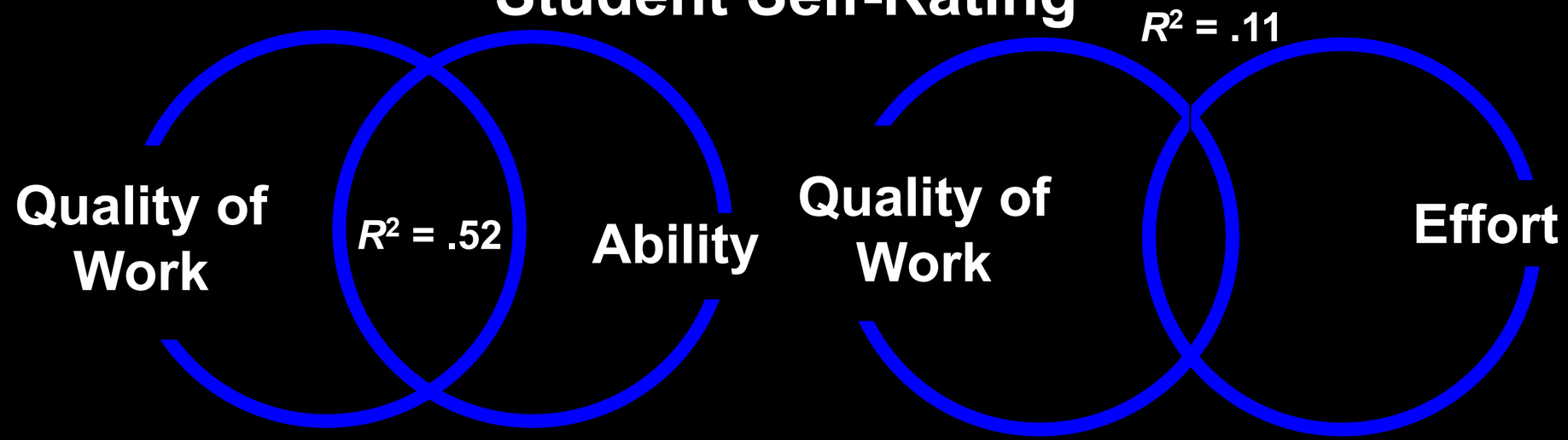
No one is better at being us than we are.

The Catch-22 of nurturing confidence…

Teacher Rating of Students



Student Self-Rating



Students Don’t See the Relationship Between Effort and Quality Work

Siegle, D., & Reis, S. M. (1998). Gender differences in teacher and student perceptions of gifted students' ability. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *42,* 39-48. doi:10.1177/001698629804200105

In gifted education, we have a difficulty balancing act recognizing…

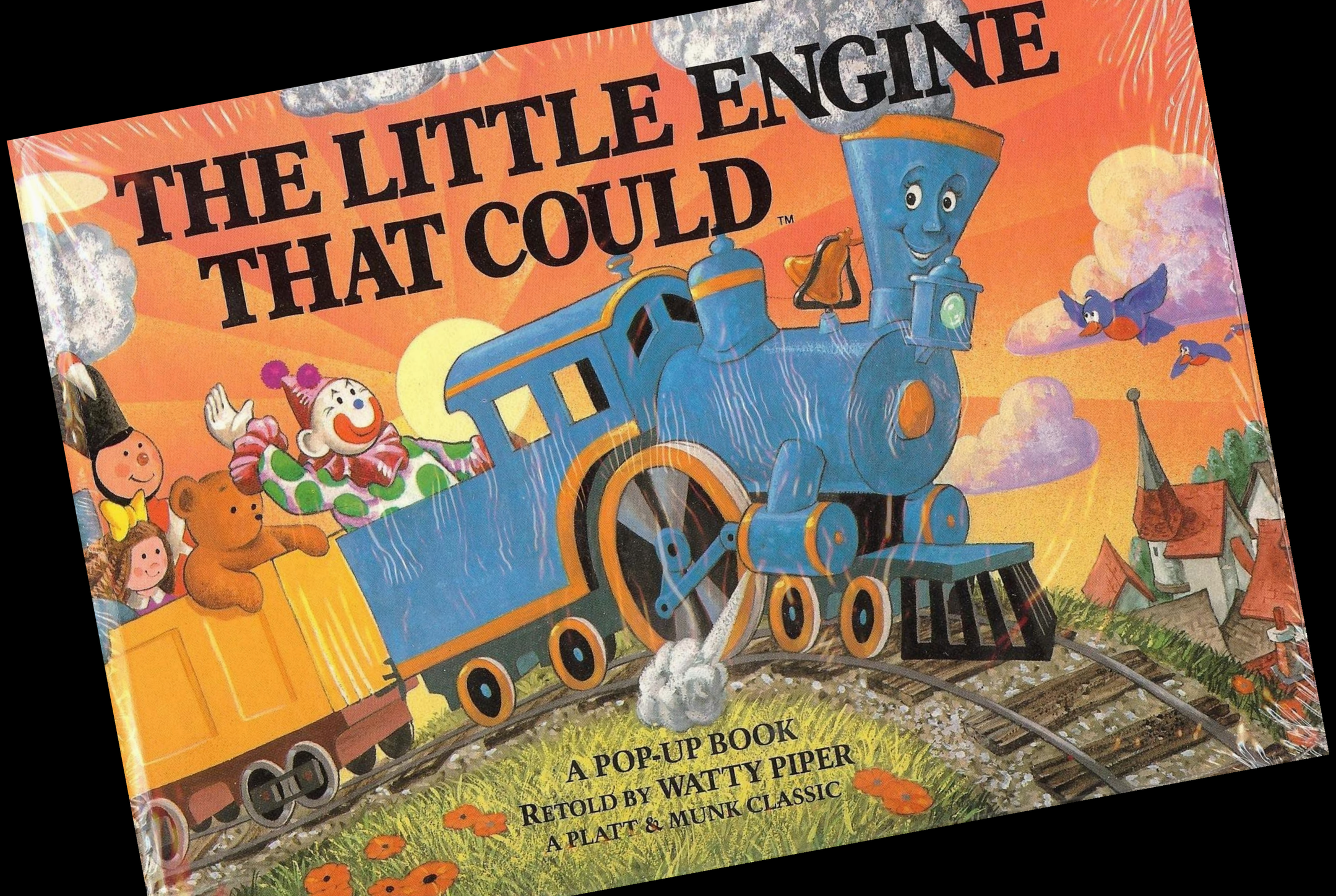
$$\frac{\text{effort}}{\text{ability}}$$

IF YOU NEED TO
WORK HARD IT
MEANS YOU ARE
NOT SMART

WORKING HARD

MAKES YOU

SMART


THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD™
A POP-UP BOOK
RETOLD BY WATTY PIPER
A PLATT & MUNK CLASSIC

performance

goals

Entity

(Fixed

Mindset)

learning/mastery

goals

Incremental

(Growth Mindset)

For children who are identified as gifted who have a fixed mindsets, every challenging task is a test of their giftedness.

Specific,
Developmental
Compliments

Build confidence by recognizing growth

recognize growth and
accomplishments…

…by using specific, developmental compliments

est

- Be sincere in compliments
- Learn to appreciate within instead of across
- Appreciate uniqueness
- Document growth to increase self-efficacy

Tips for appreciating self and one's talents

Motivation issues that might arise from being gifted

identity becomes tied to achievement and the gifted label

need to be perfect
fear of failure
imposter phenomenon

experience asynchrony with peers

esoteric interests
boredom and possible underachievement
asynchrony of skills

esoteric interests

Sometimes this is interest in a topic earlier than peers.
Sometimes this is interest in an unusual topic.

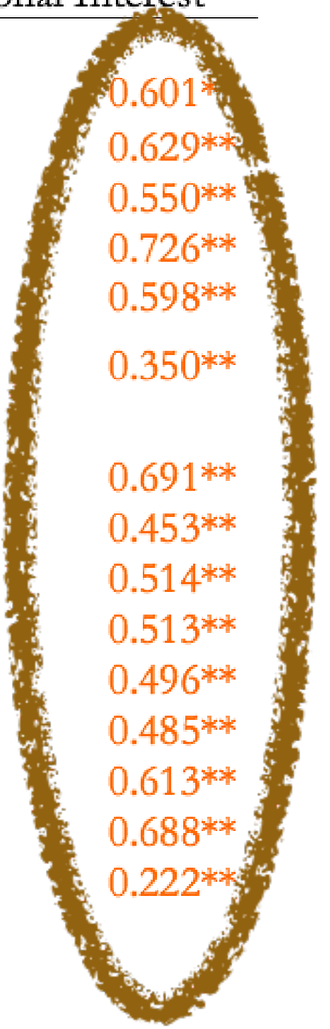
“…that’s dumb”

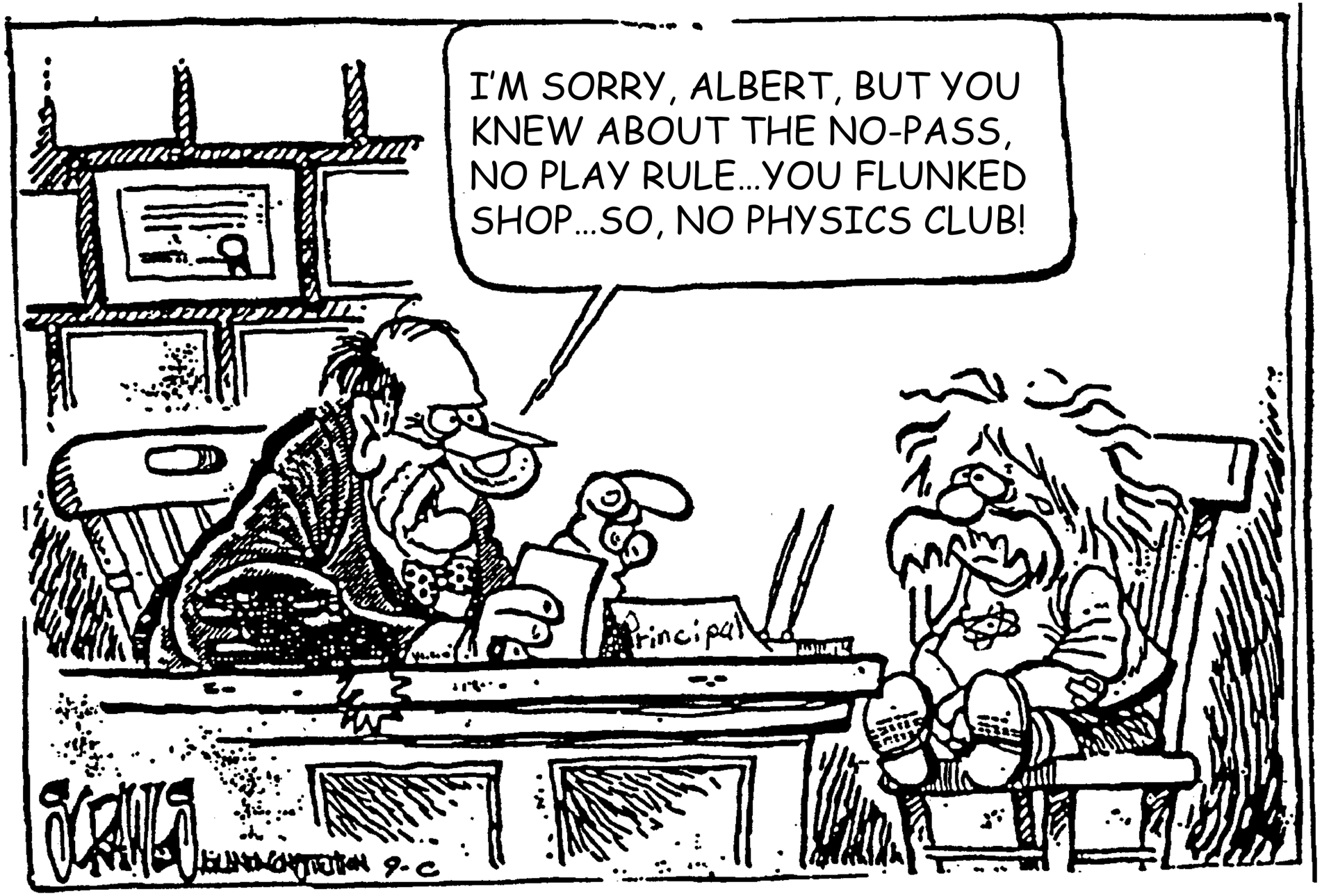
Never underestimate the power of student interest in making learning meaningful.

Interest is directly related to high achievement.

Relationship Between Perceived Level of Talent and Belief in an Entity Theory of Intelligence, the Importance of Natural Ability in High Performance Levels, the Important of Personal Effort in High Performance Levels, and Interest in Each of 15 Talent Areas

Talent Area	Entity Belief	Role of Ability	Role of Effort	Personal Interest
Musical Skills	-0.093	0.019	0.36**	0.601**
Art Skills	-0.123	-0.053	0.16	0.629**
Mathematical Skills	0.027	0.263**	0.059	0.550**
Athletic Skills	0.003	0.124	0.116	0.726**
Writing Skills	0.082	0.259**	0.064	0.598**
Spelling Skills	-0.052	0.162	0.089	0.350**
Dance Skills	0.008	0.109	0.18*	0.691**
Inter-Personal Skills	-0.191*	0.15	0.11	0.453**
Logical/Reasoning Skills	-0.052	0.26**	-0.069	0.514**
Visual/Spatial Skills	-0.126	0.137	0.086	0.513**
Language Acquisition Skills	-0.029	0.063	0.095	0.496**
Verbal Skills	-0.034	0.237**	0.066	0.485**
Leadership Skills	-0.185*	0.186*	0.213*	0.613**
Science Skills	-0.072	0.064	0.05	0.688**
Overall Academic Skills	-0.002	0.093	0.038	0.222**

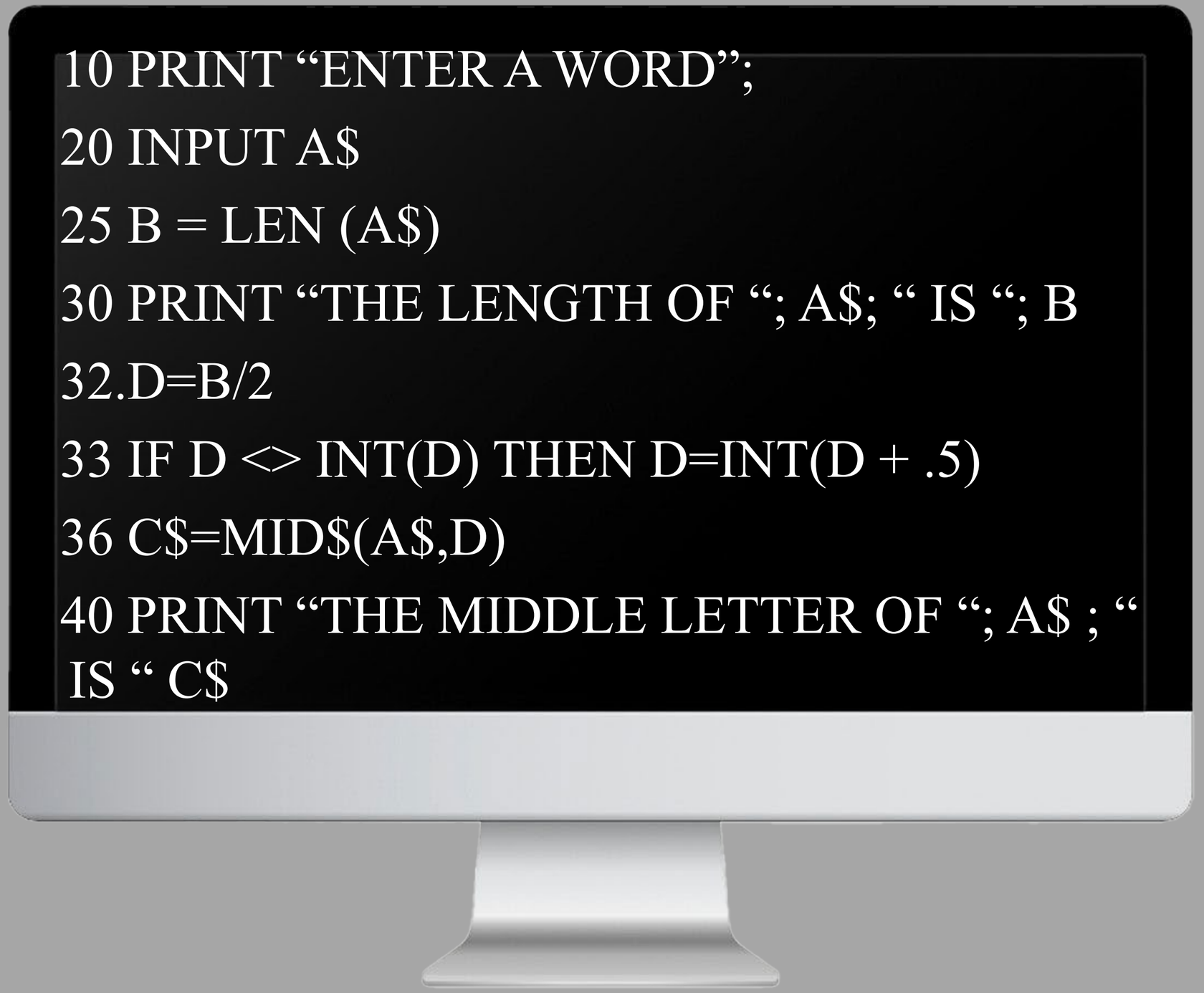



I'M SORRY, ALBERT, BUT YOU KNEW ABOUT THE NO-PASS, NO PLAY RULE...YOU FLUNKED SHOP...SO, NO PHYSICS CLUB!
Principal

A Reading
A Math
A Science
D Spelling

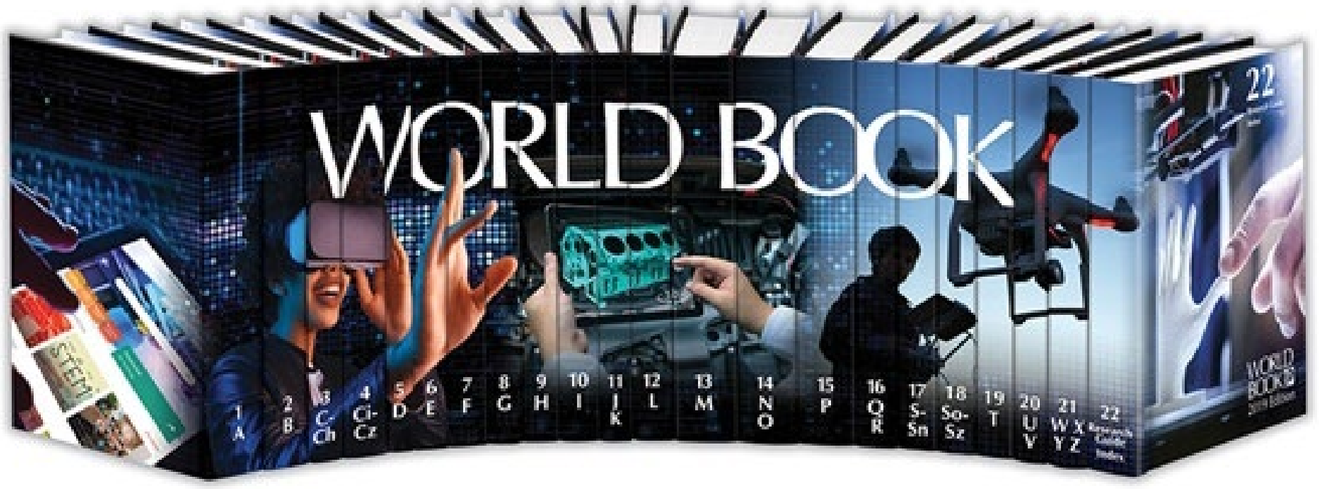
personal
interest

10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C: 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C: 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C: 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C: 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET CGET C: 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C: 10 GOTO 23: FOR A= 1 TO 20 :NEXT A: PRINT: IF A=1 THEN B=23: GOSUB 200: INPUT A$: PRINT A$: GET C 10 GOTO 23: FOR


10 PRINT “ENTER A WORD”;
20 INPUT A$
25 B = LEN (A$)
30 PRINT “THE LENGTH OF “; A$; “ IS “; B
32.D=B/2
33 IF D <> INT(D) THEN D=INT(D + .5)
36 C$=MID$(A$,D)
40 PRINT “THE MIDDLE LETTER OF “; A$; “
IS “ C$

interest

situational interest

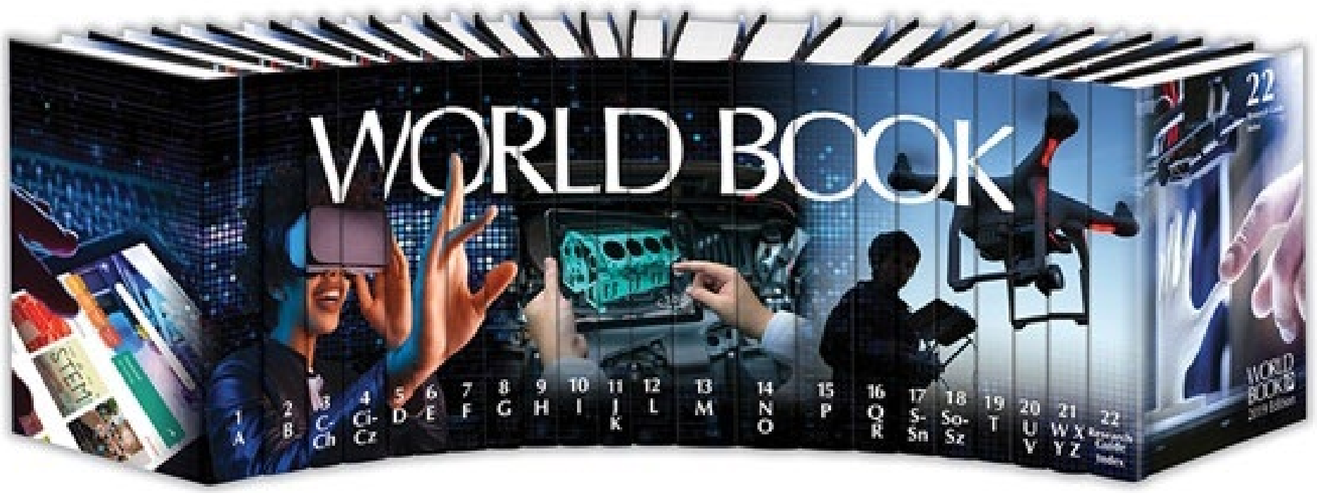

WORLD BOOK
1 A
2 B
3 C-Ch
4 Ci-Cz
5 D
6 E
7 F
8 G
9 H
10 I
11 J-K
12 L
13 M
14 N-O
15 P
16 Q-R
17 S-Sn
18 So-Sz
19 T
20 U-V
21 W-X-Y-Z
22
STEM
WORLD BOOK

mis·tle·toe

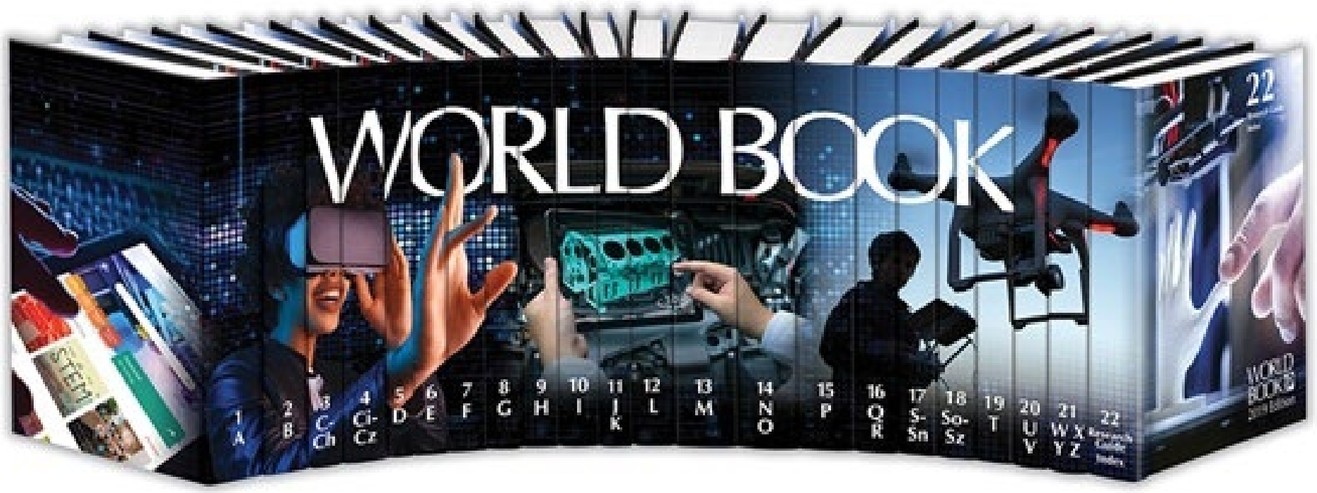
/ˈmisəlˌtō/

noun

1.a leathery-leaved parasitic plant which grows on apple, oak, and other broadleaf trees and bears white glutinous berries in winter.



paintings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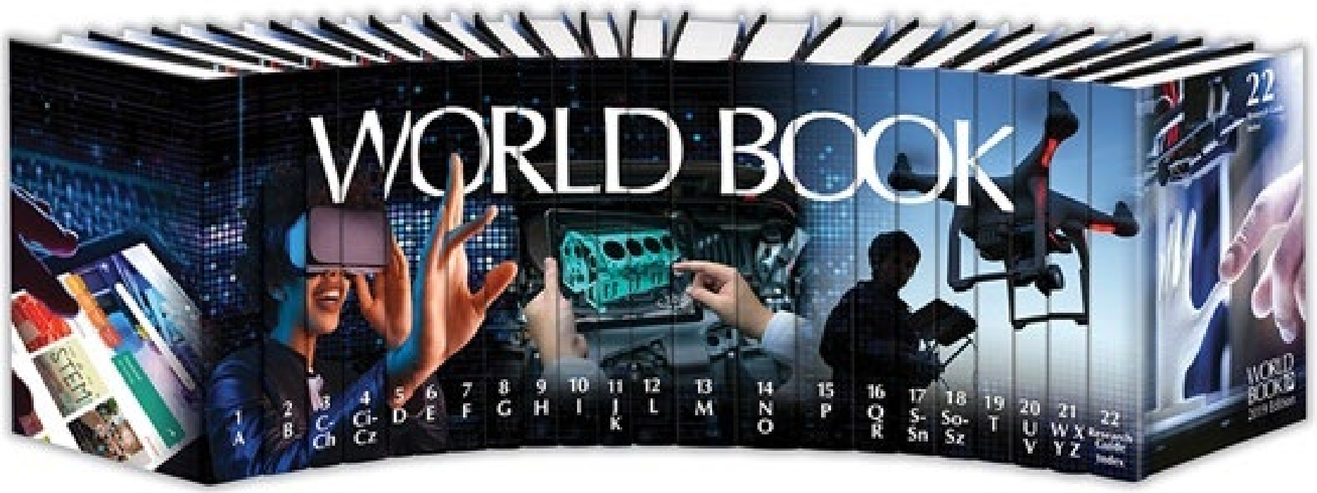
11 J-K
12 L
13 M
14 N-O
15 P
16 Q-R
17 S-Sn
18 So-Sz
19 T
20 U-V
21 W-X-Y-Z
22
WORLD BOOKS
2019 Edition

A Harlin Quist Book

THE GERANIUM ON THE WINDOW SILL JUST DIED BUT TEACHER YOU WENT RIGHT ON

BY ALBERT CULLUM

paintings


WORLD BOOK
STEM
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2 B
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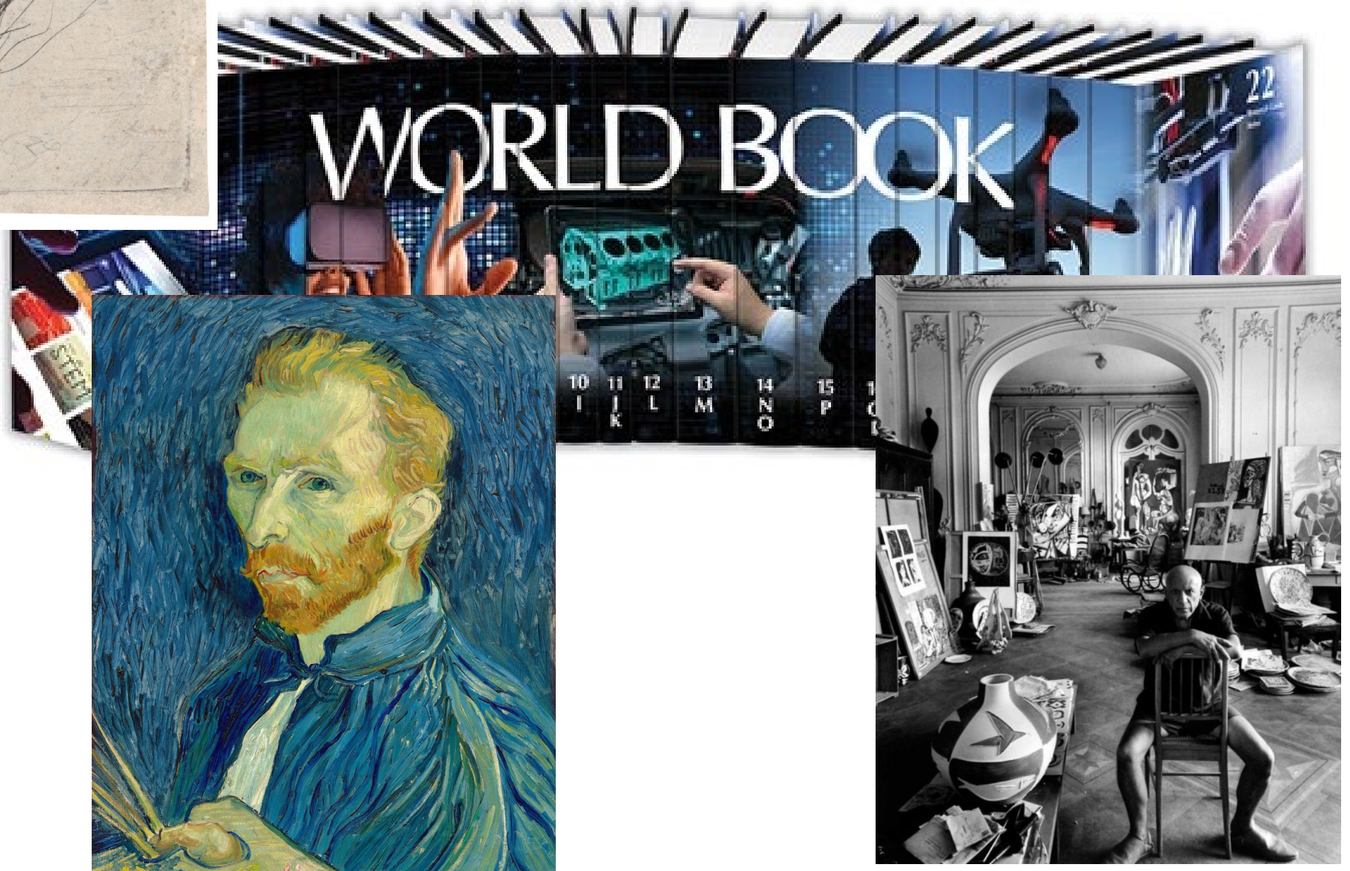
5 D
6 E
7 F
8 G
9 H
10 I
11 J-K
12 L
13 M
14 N-O
15 P
16 Q-R
17 S-Sn
18 So-Sz
19 T
20 U-V
21 W-X-Y-Z
22
WORLD BOOKS
2019 Edition

Pablo Picasso
Vincent Van Gogh
Rembrandt
Georgia O’Keeffe
Georges Seurat
Charles Russell



Photograph of O’Keeffe by Tony Vaccaro / Getty
Photograph of Picasso by Arnold Newman

Van Gogh

Picasso

…on the
way to
learning
about
parasites,
my students
discovered
Van Gogh
and a love
of art.

- Support students' interests
- Provide options for students to incorporate their interests
- Accept that interests change
- Expose students to different topics

Using interest to increase motivation

Motivation issues that might arise from being gifted

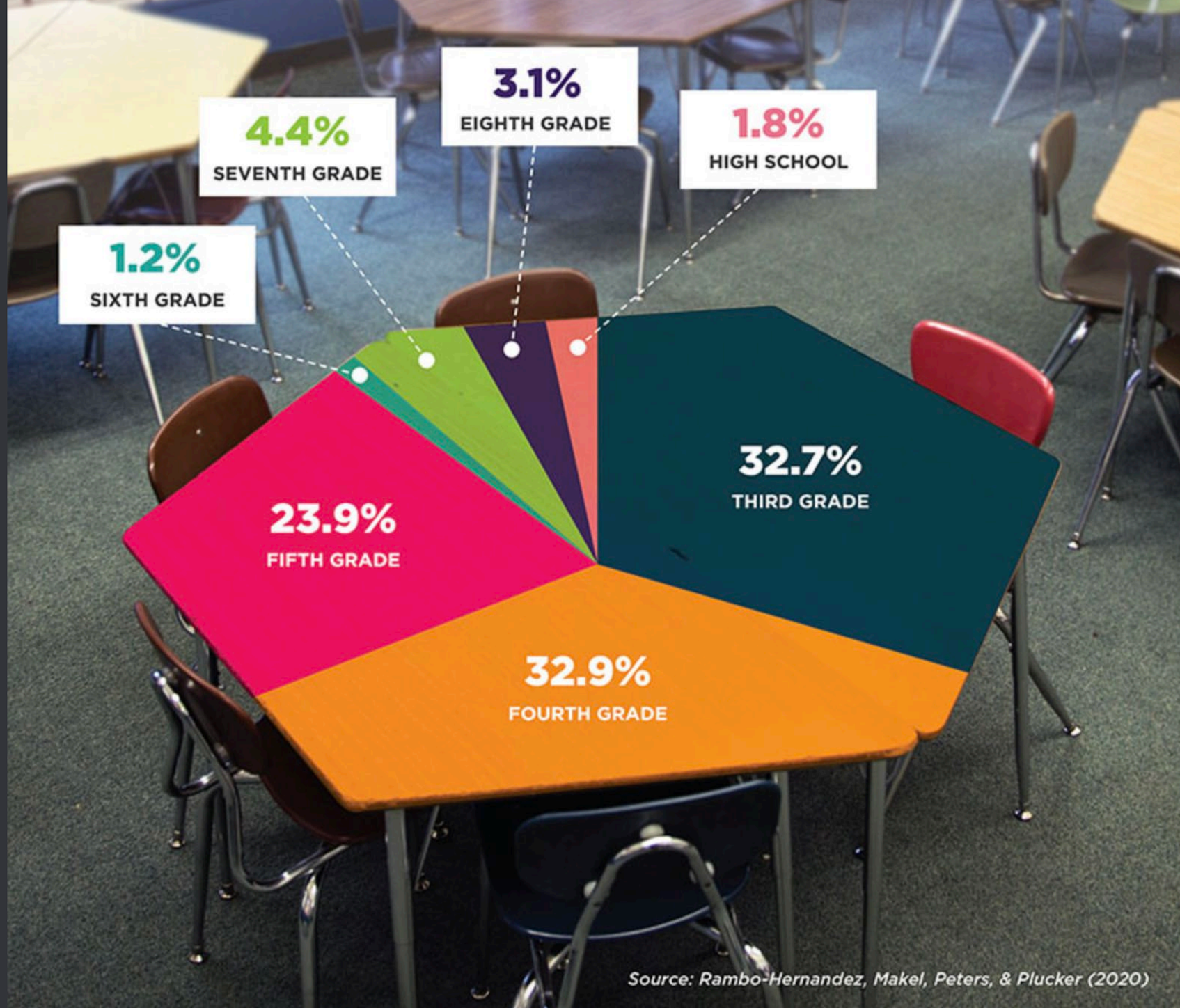
identity becomes tied to achievement and the gifted label

- need to be perfect
- fear of failure
- imposter phenomenon

experience asynchrony with peers

- esoteric interests
- boredom and possible underachievement
- asynchrony of skills

Typical Fifth-Grade Classroom



“I am afraid you will forget how to vacuum”

“I just don’t understand. I know she knows how to vacuum, but she just won’t do it.”

Enrichment

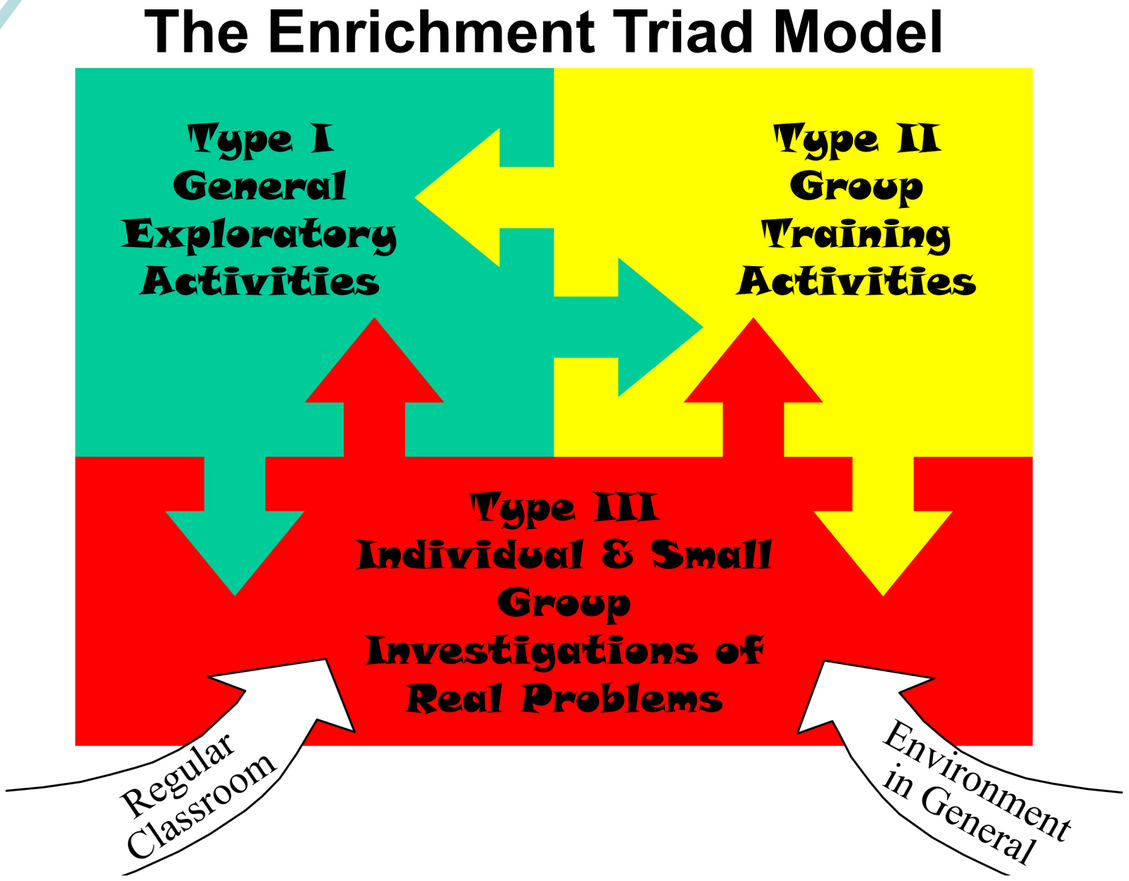
- Enrichment Clusters
- Type III Authentic Learning

Acceleration

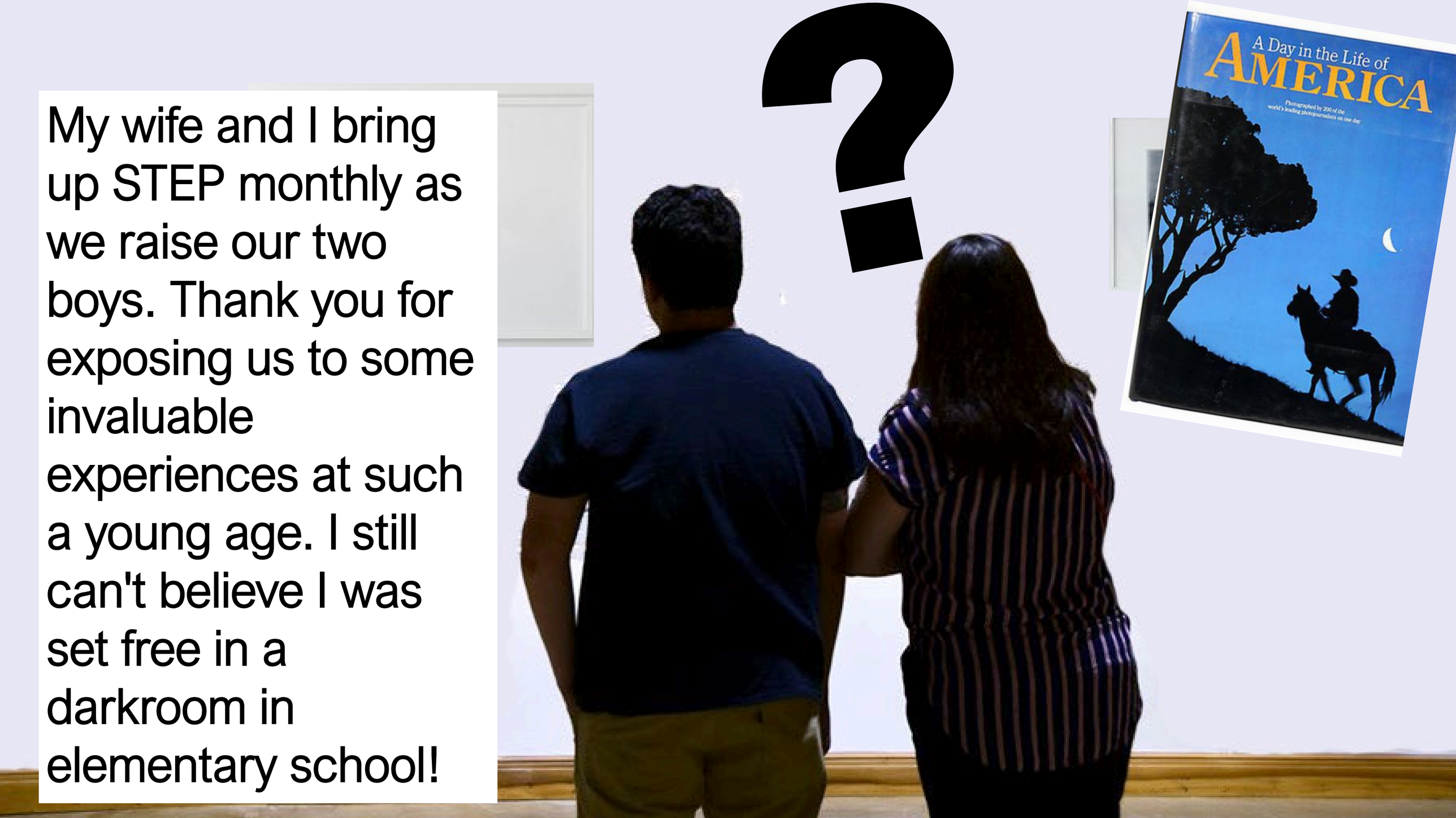
- Subject Specific
- Whole Grade
- Compacting

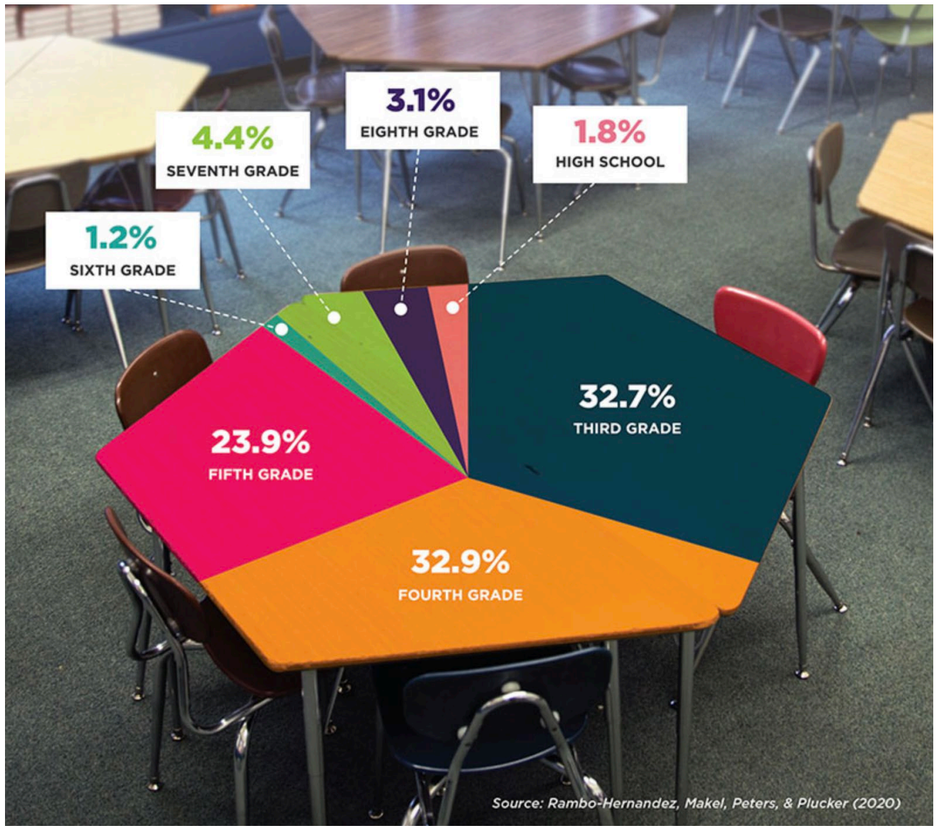
Enrichment

- Enrichment Clusters
- Type III Authentic Learning



My wife and I bring up STEP monthly as we raise our two boys. Thank you for exposing us to some invaluable experiences at such a young age. I still can't believe I was set free in a darkroom in elementary school!





Acceleration

- Subject Specific
- Whole Grade
- Compacting

Whole-Grade Acceleration

Universally screen students to determine who has

- cognitive scores above 120 and
- above average reading and math achievement scores two grade levels ahead

Subject-Specific Acceleration

Universally screen students to determine who has

- local reading achievement scores[91] in the top 10%
- Local math achievement scores in the top 10%

NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON GIFTED EDUCATION

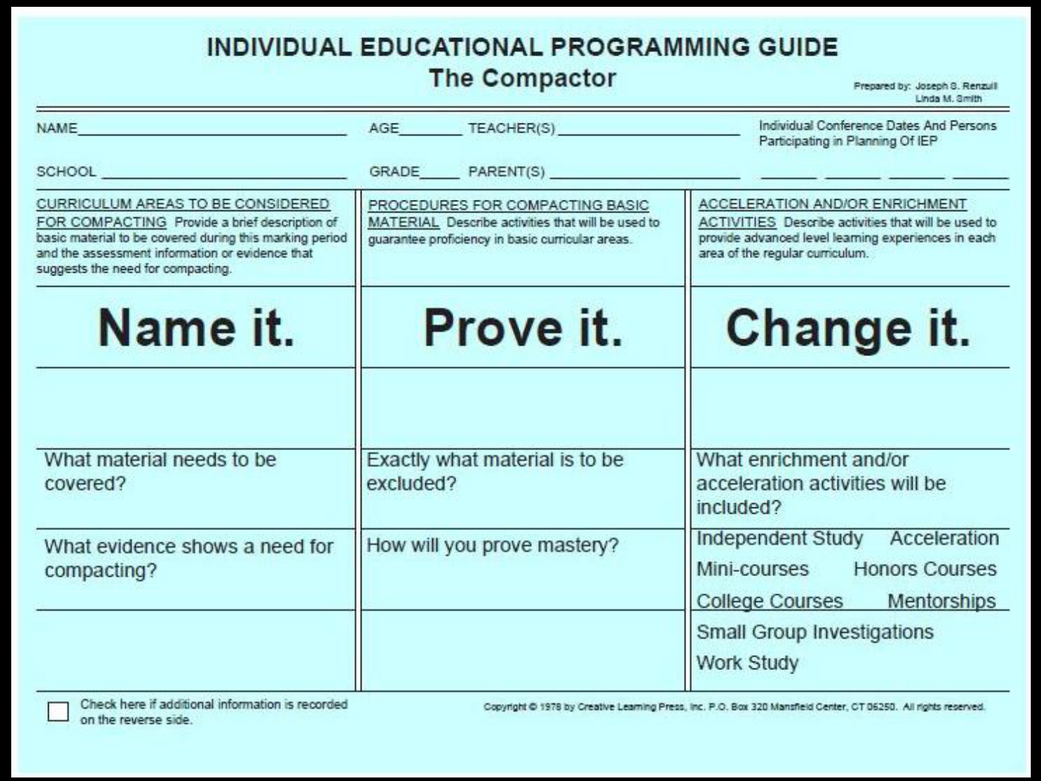
Is your school interested in doing acceleration better?

NCRGE is seeking schools serving grades 2-5 interested in ***FREE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES*** and ***assistance in making acceleration decisions***.

ncrge.uconn.edu/acceleration

What is the most underutilized strategy with gifted students?

Pre-assessment and Compacting



INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING GUIDE

The Compactor

Prepared by: Joseph S. Renzulli
Linda M. Smith

NAME_____ AGE_____ TEACHER(S) _____

SCHOOL _____ GRADE____ PARENT(S) _____

Individual Conference Dates And Persons Participating in Planning Of IEP

_____ _____ _____ _____

CURRICULUM AREAS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR COMPACTING Provide a brief description of basic material to be covered during this marking period and the assessment information or evidence that suggests the need for compacting.	PROCEDURES FOR COMPACTING BASIC MATERIAL Describe activities that will be used to guarantee proficiency in basic curricular areas.	ACCELERATION AND/OR ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES Describe activities that will be used to provide advanced level learning experiences in each area of the regular curriculum.
Name it.	**Prove it.**	**Change it.**
What material needs to be covered?	Exactly what material is to be excluded?	What enrichment and/or acceleration activities will be included?
What evidence shows a need for compacting?	How will you prove mastery?	Independent Study Acceleration Mini-courses Honors Courses College Courses Mentorships
		Small Group Investigations Work Study

☐ Check here if additional information is recorded on the reverse side.

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Academic Challenge

Academic Challenge

“I don’t want to be academically challenged…

Academic Challenge

“I don’t want to be academically challenged... I want to be intellectually stimulated.”

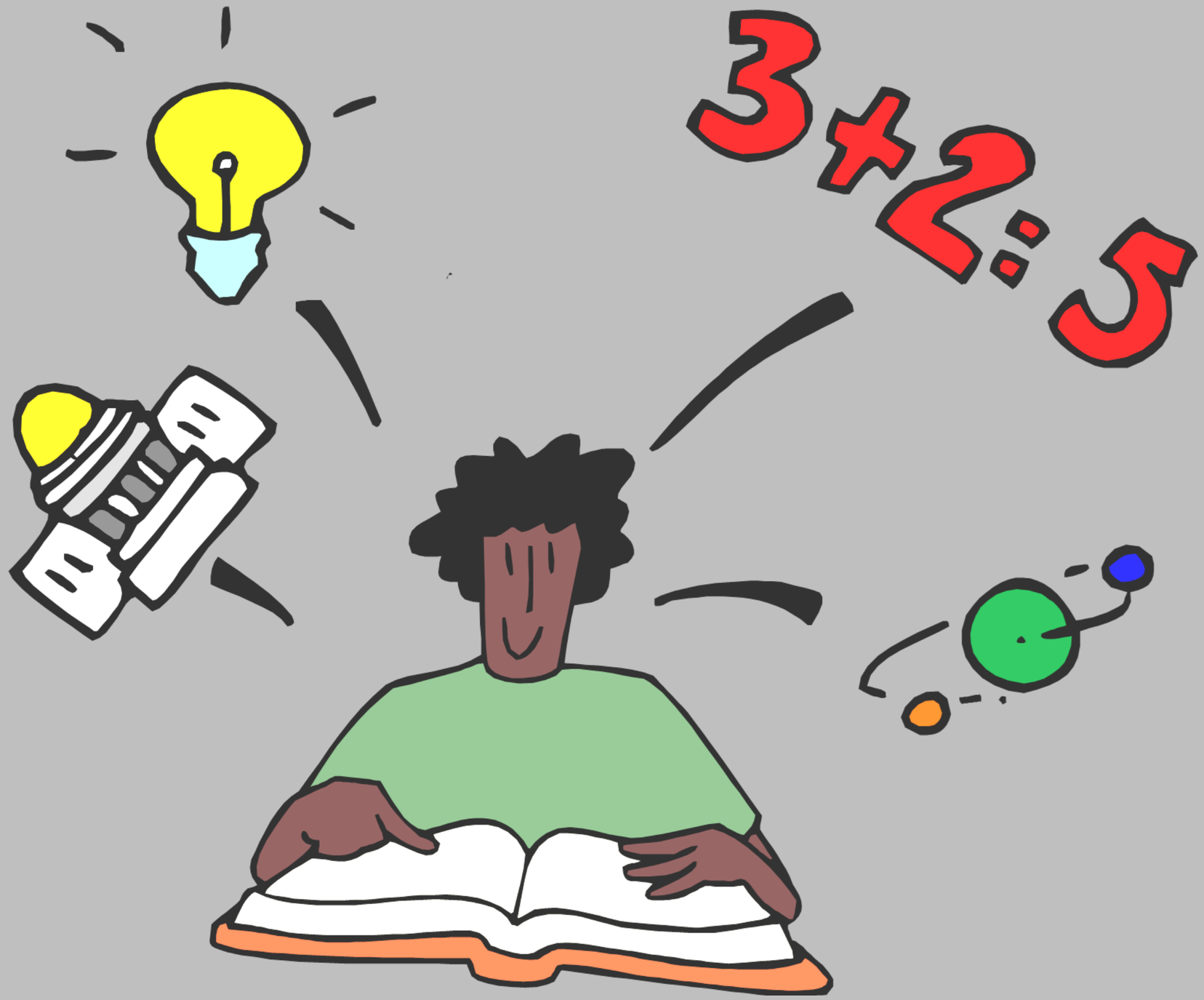
Academic Challenge

quest for mastery

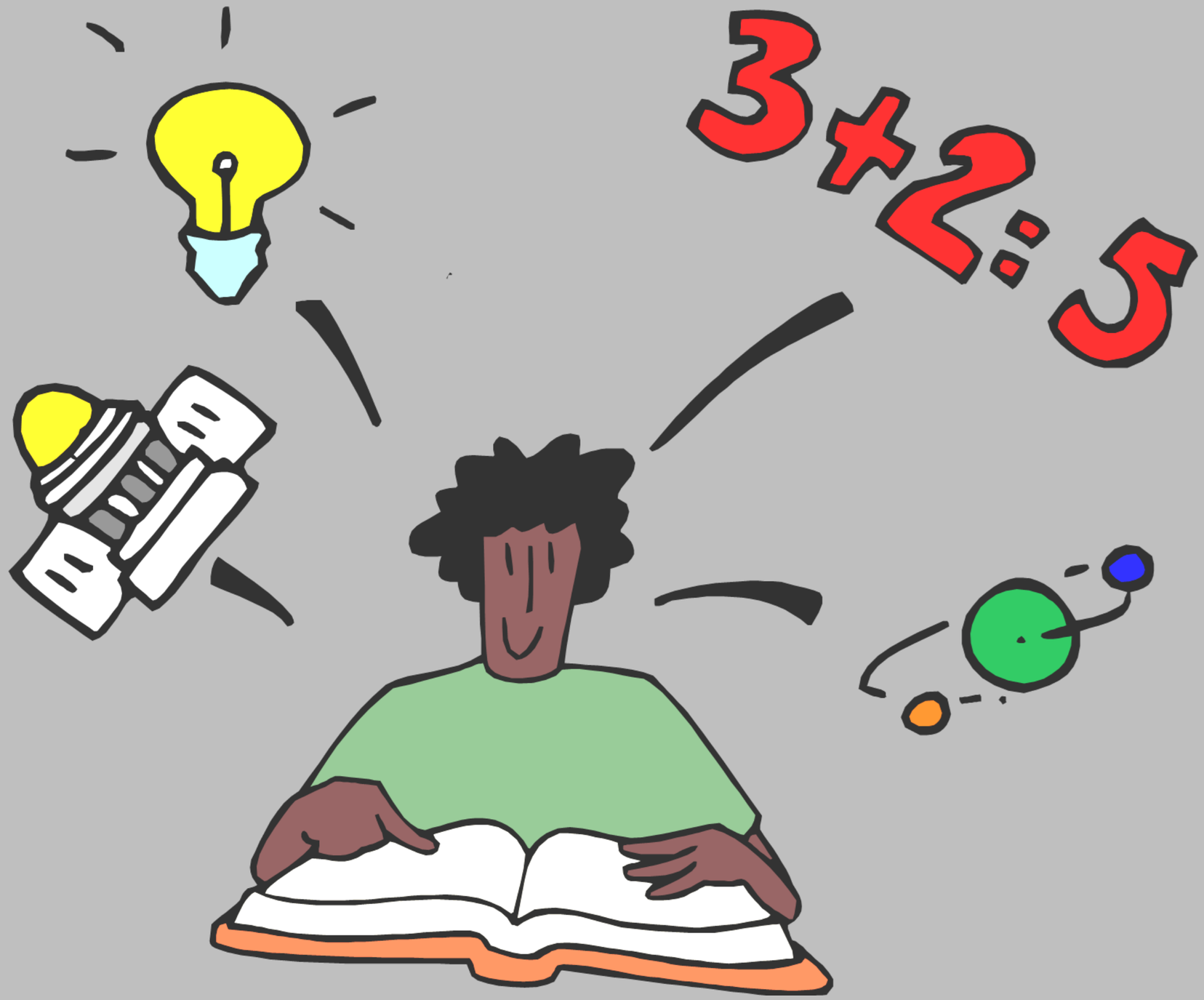
Intellectual Stimulation

search for meaning

What is the relationship between academic challenge and intellectual stimulation?



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



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

Too little academic challenge, too little intellectual stimulation produces bored students.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the term “flow”

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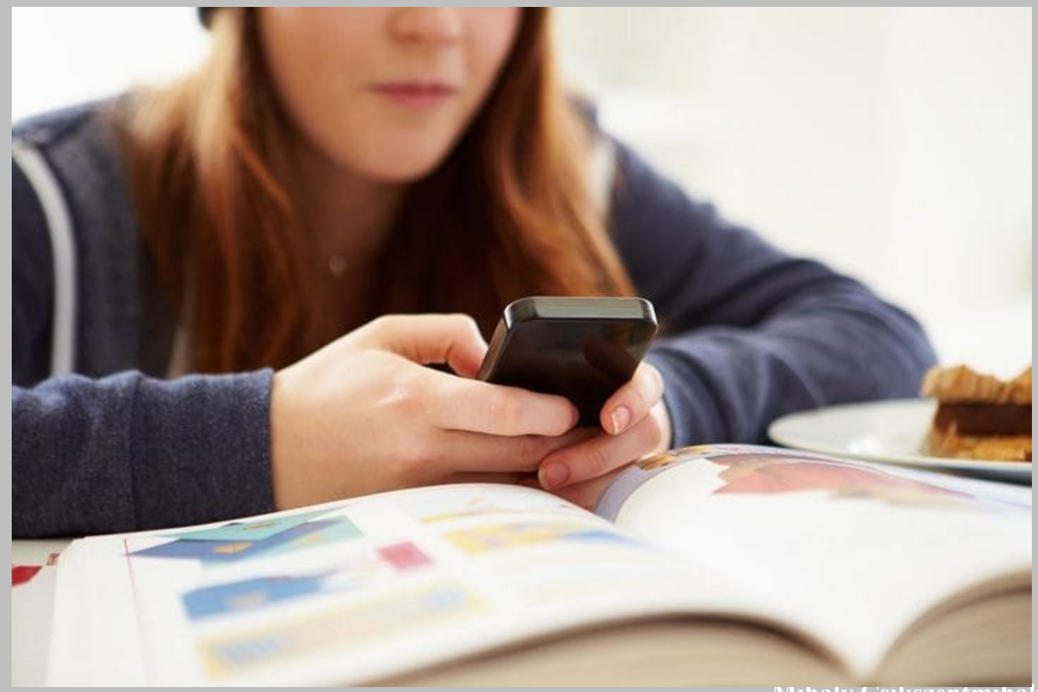

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Because content is academically challenging does not guarantee that students will find it intellectually stimulating.

Too lit… little intelle… bored stude…

Too m… o little intelle… "turned off" st…

Too much academic challenge with adequate intellectual stimulation produces frustrated students.

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Is what I am asking students to do sufficiently challenging AND intellectually stimulating?

If not, how can I make it?

Too little academic challenge, too little intellectual stimulation produces bored students.

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Too much academic challenge with adequate intellectual stimulation produces frustrated students.

Optimal challenge combined with intellectual stimulation produces students in a state of "flow".

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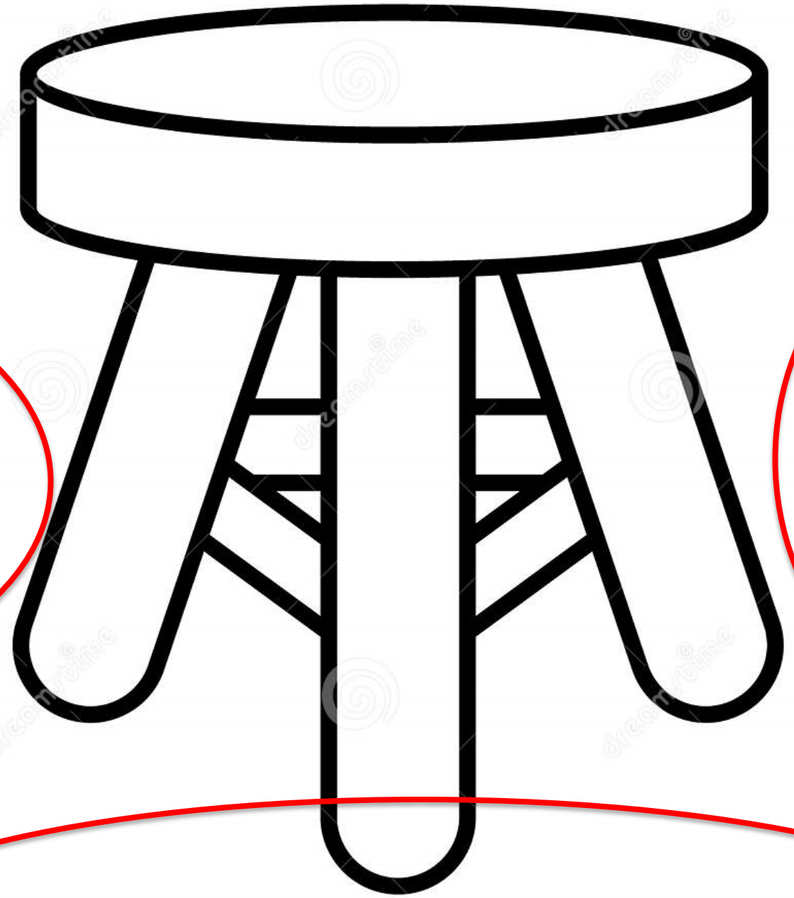
Label students as gifted

Develop students’ gifts

It is the servicing of the gifts and talents that makes the difference in children’s lives in the benefits it brings to them and to society.

Three Legs of Talent Development



Instruction for Academic Growth (Whole-grade and Subject-specific Acceleration Options)

Increased Depth and Complexity in Instruction in classroom

Authentic Learning Opportunities Based on Student Interest

Graphic from dreamstime.com

Ways to address advanced learning needs

- Ensure you are providing an intellectually stimulating environment
- Advocate for advanced learning opportunities
- Encourage student interests

Motivation issues that might arise from being gifted

identity becomes tied to achievement and the gifted label

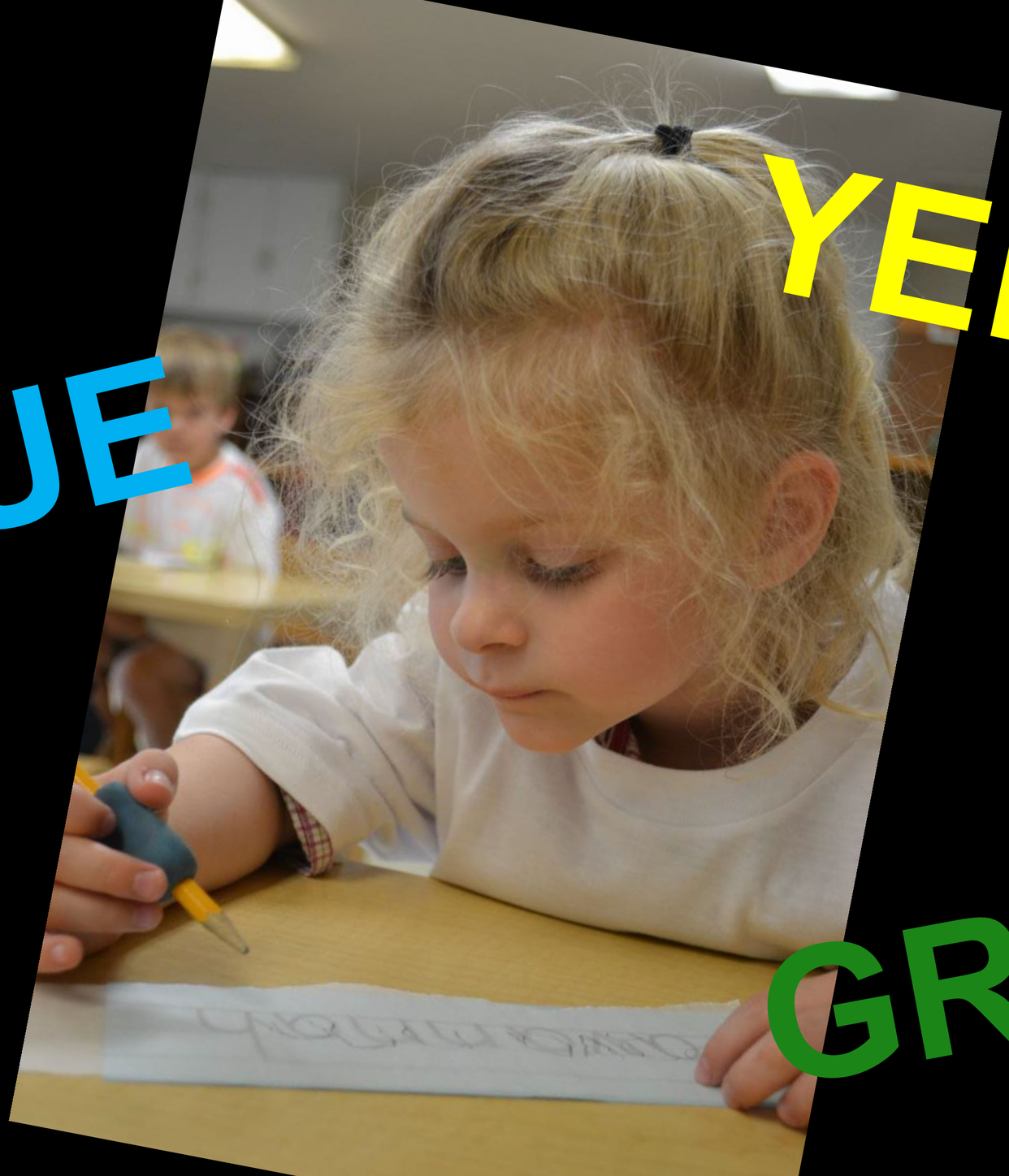
- need to be perfect
- fear of failure
- imposter phenomenon

experience asynchrony with peers

- esoteric interests
- boredom and possible underachievement
- asynchrony of skills

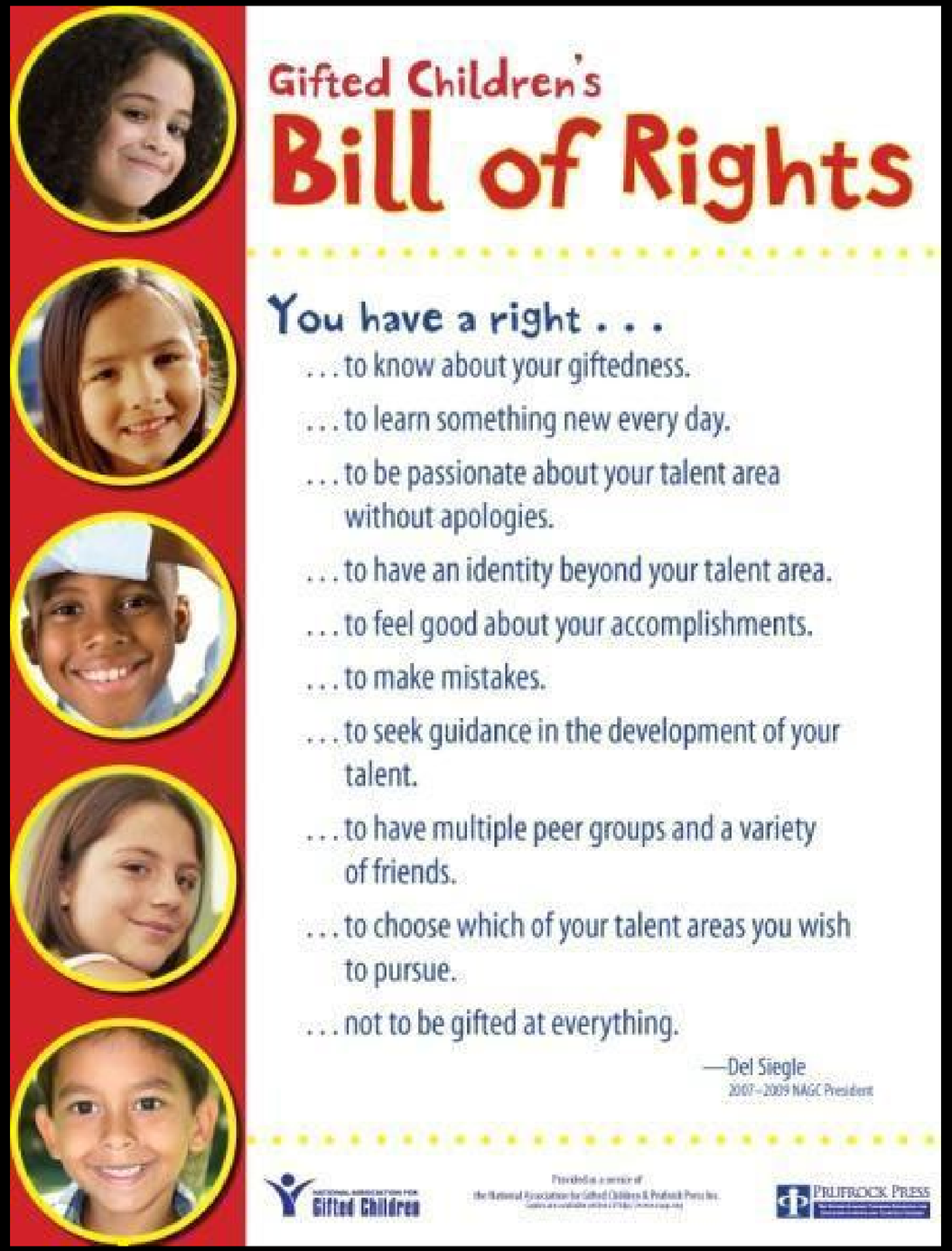
RED

BLUE



YELLOW

GREEN



"I wish someone had told me that I didn't have to be good at everything."

"Could I have one of those cards too?"

- Appreciate strengths
- Don’t expect universal excellence
- It is alright to “just have fun” in some areas
- Don’t lose track that the kid is a kid

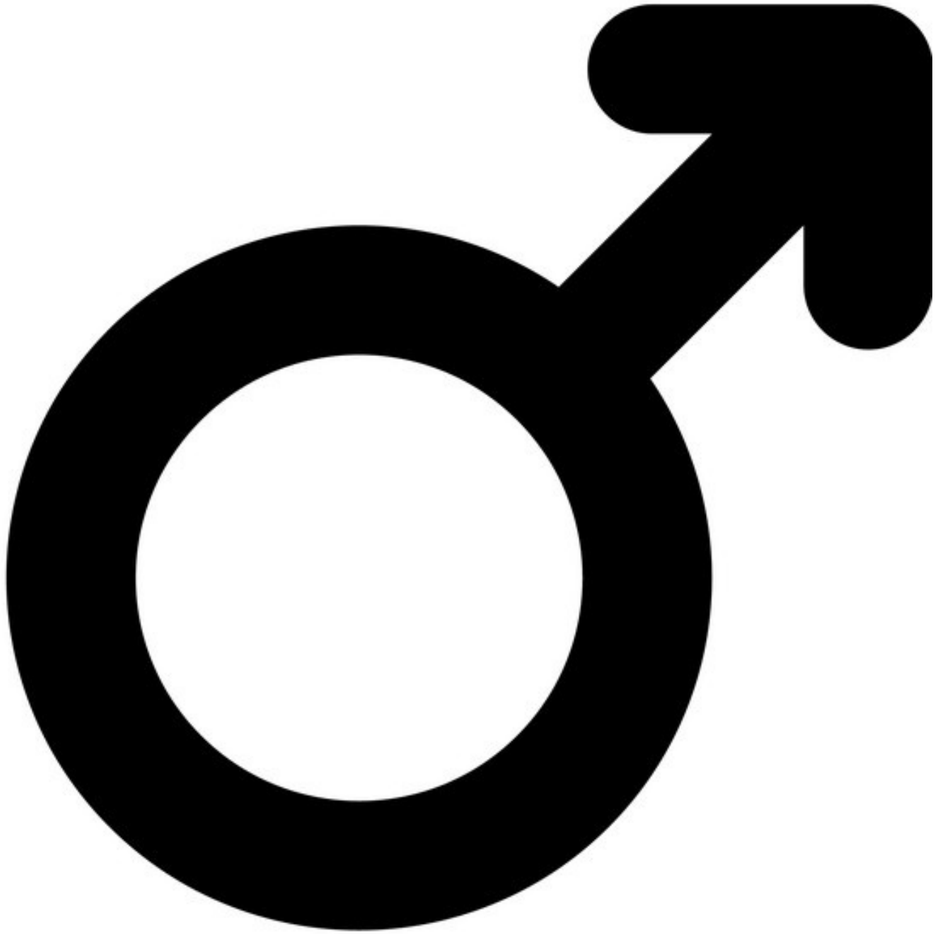
Appreciating irregularities

Who are we talking about

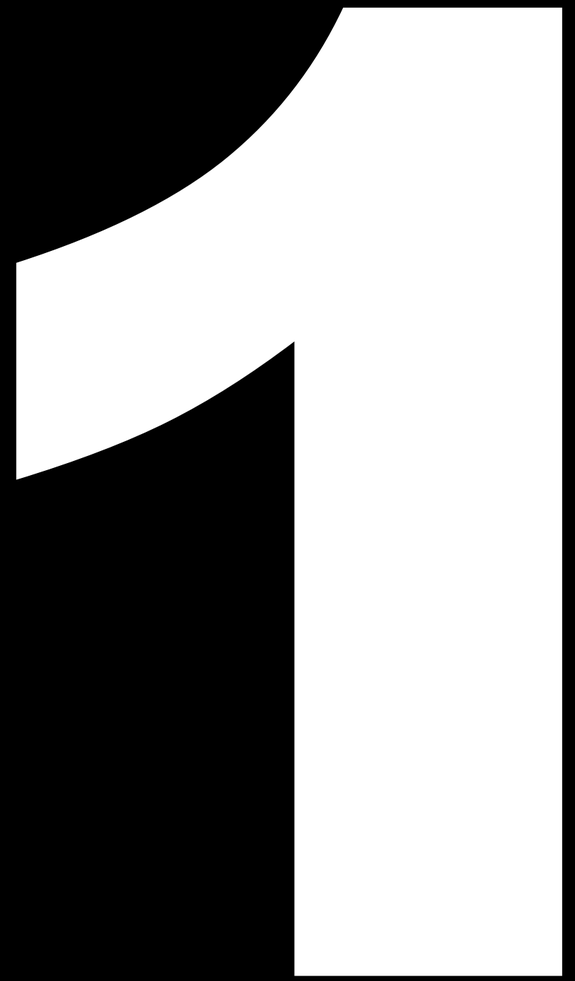
Think of a student or someone in your life whom you believe has motivation issues

2X

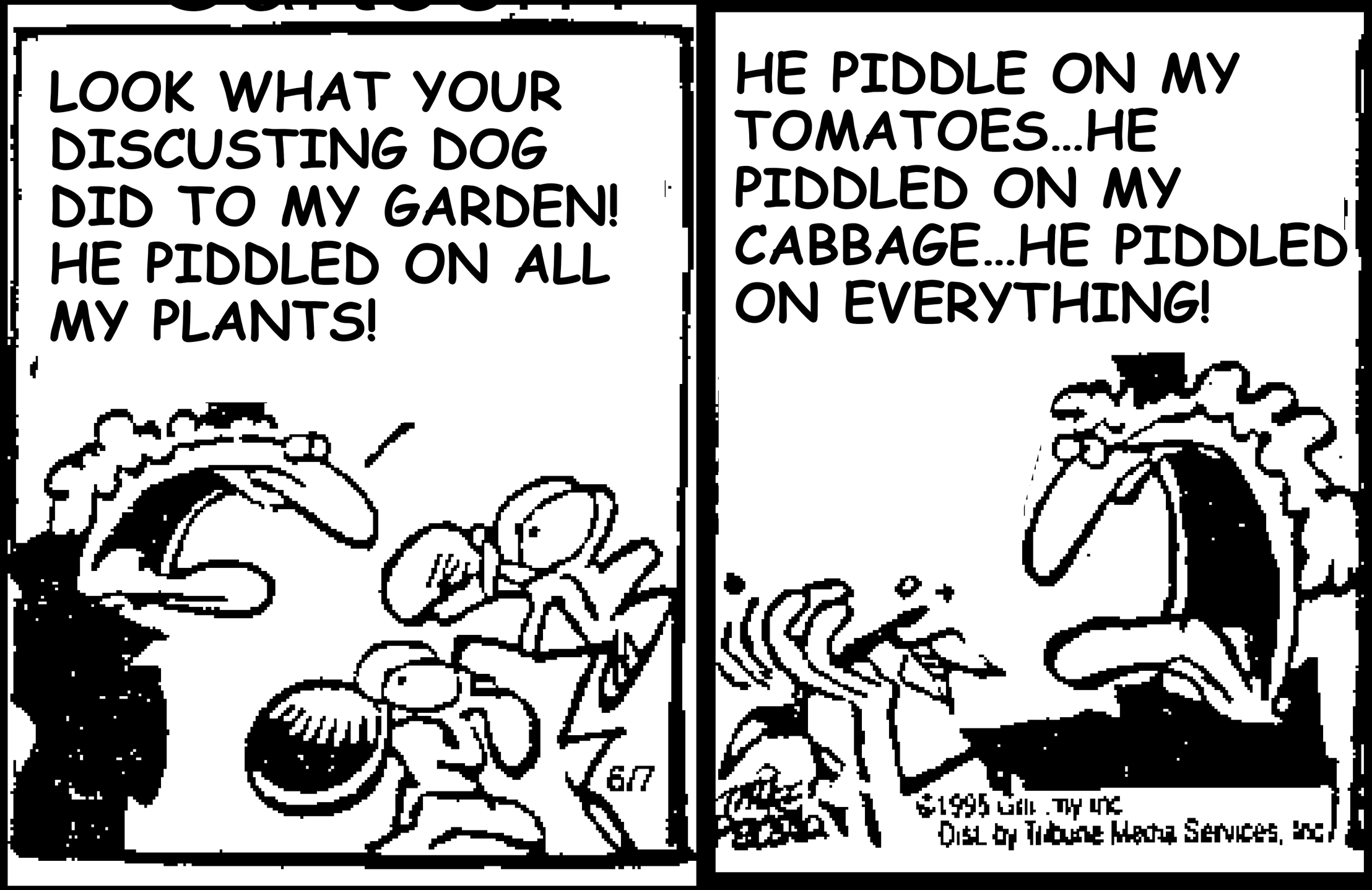
3X

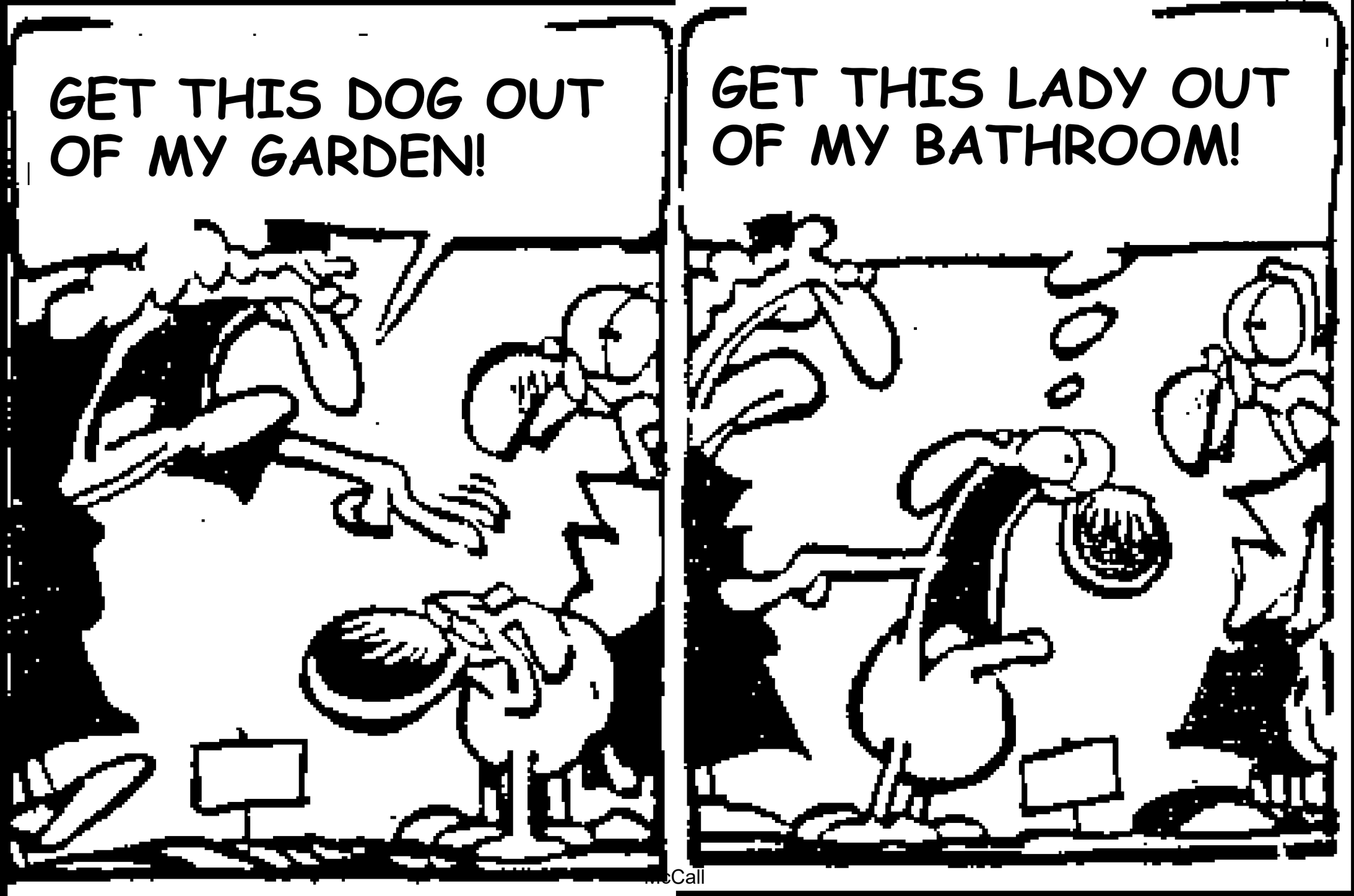


Not all low achievers draw attention to themselves



From who’s perspective is it underachievement or low motivation?


LOOK WHAT YOUR DISCUSTING DOG DID TO MY GARDEN! HE PIDDLED ON ALL MY PLANTS!
6/7
HE PIDDLE ON MY TOMATOES...HE PIDDLED ON MY CABBAGE...HE PIDDLED ON EVERYTHING!
©1995 Gill...my Inc
Dist. by Tribune Media Services, Inc.


GET THIS DOG OUT OF MY GARDEN!
GET THIS LADY OUT OF MY BATHROOM!

Don’t assume the student doesn’t care or want to achieve

Sample

$N = 212$

$\frac{3}{4}$ ♂

IQ=131.8

ADHD IV Home Rating Scales-Parent

Type	% in GUA Sample	% in Norm Group
Inattentive	23.13	3.2
Hyperactive	0	2.1
Combined	6.72	2.2
Overall prevalence	29.85	7.5

7X

ADHD IV School Rating Scales-Teacher

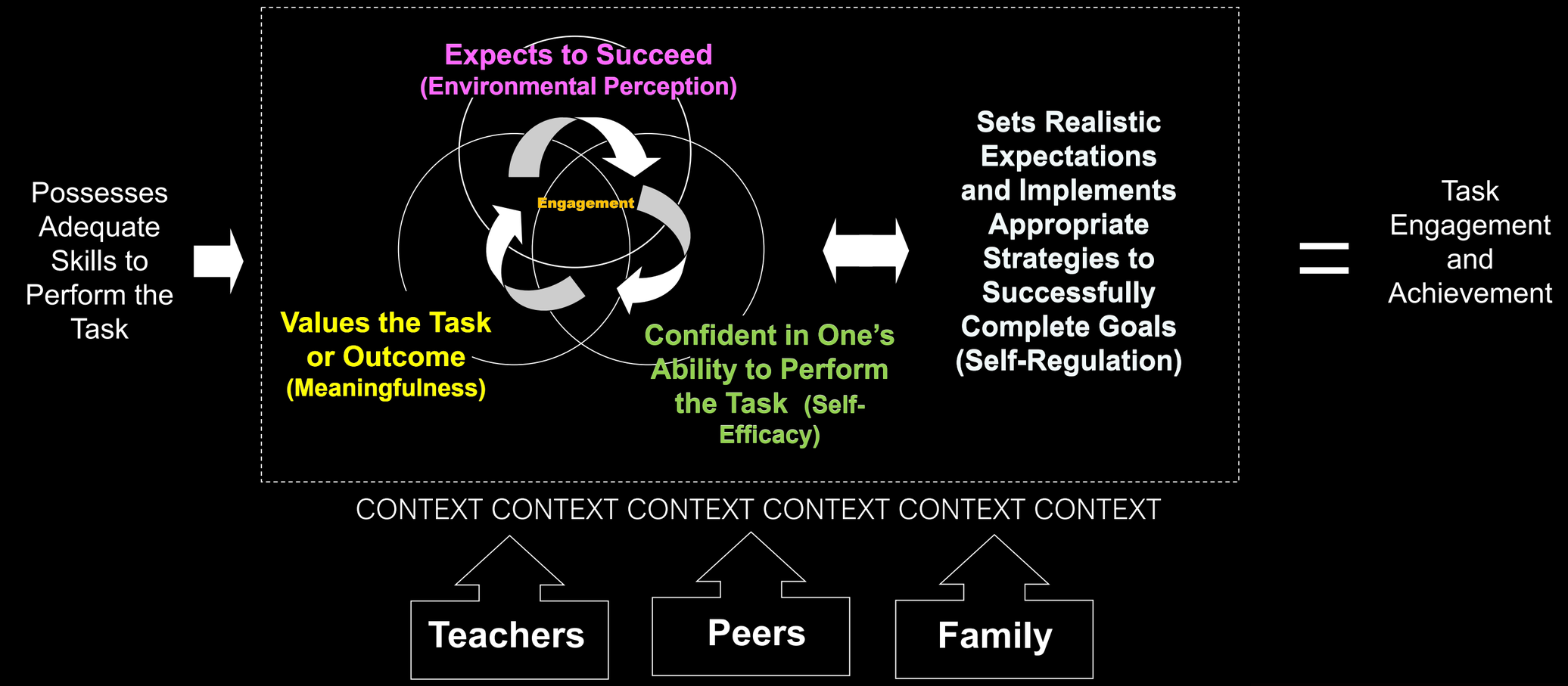
Type	% in GUA Sample	% in Norm Group
Inattentive	39.62	10
Hyperactive	1.89	3.2
Combined	9.43	8.4
Overall prevalence	50.94	21.6

4X

McCoach, D. B., Siegle, D., & Rubenstein, L. D. (2020). Pay attention to inattention: Exploring ADHD symptoms in a sample of underachieving gifted students. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 62*(2), 100-116. http://doi.org/10.1177/0016986219901320

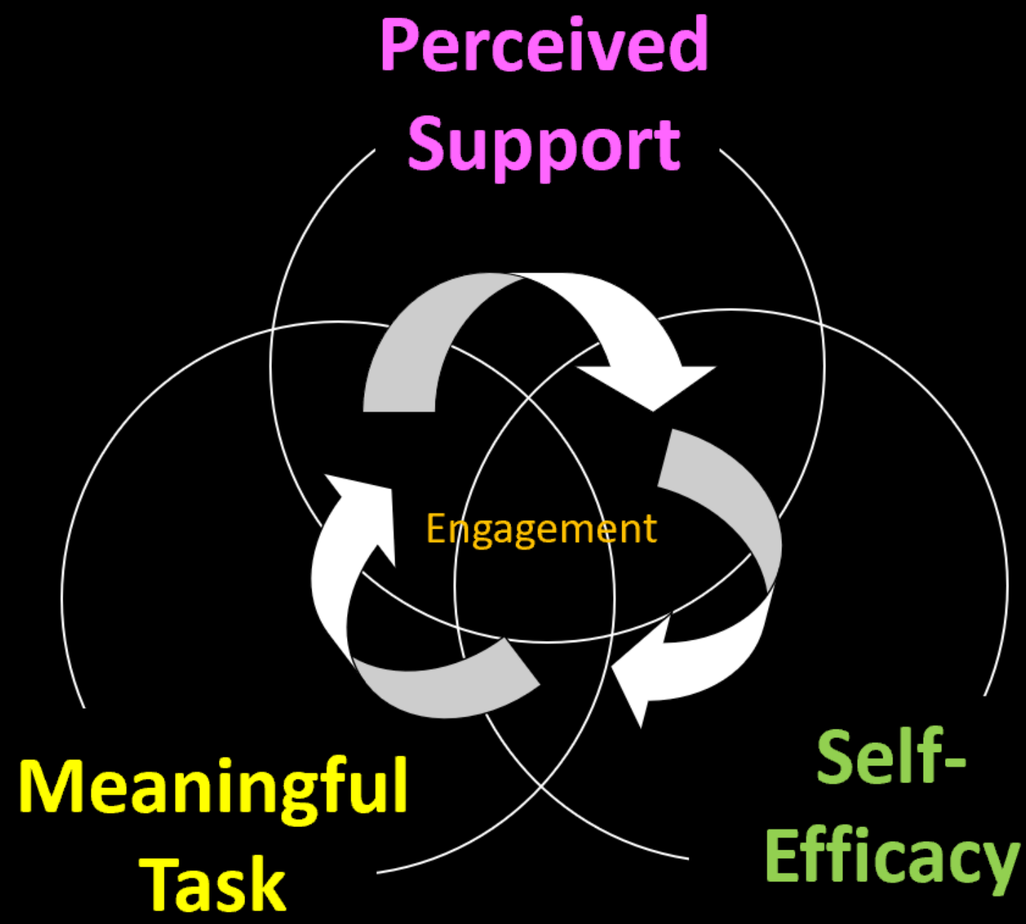
What beliefs do we need to have about ourself and tasks before we engage in them?

Achievement Orientation Model



Each of the four elements of the model (Meaningfulness, Self-Efficacy, Environmental Perception, and Self-Regulation) is usually present in individuals who achieve at a level commensurate with their abilities. Some of these factors may be stronger than others, but overall, achievement-oriented individuals display a combination of all four traits. Remediation can be based on diagnosing which element or elements are deficit and addressing them. Two individuals might have very different remediation programs based on their achievement-orientation profiles.

UCONN
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT



Confidence: I am capable!

Interest: It's important to me!

Trust: I have what I need and feel supported!

Engage: I am ready to do it!

Confidence

Interest

Trust

Engagement

When students value a task or outcome and have positive perceptions of their skills and their opportunities for success, they are more likely to implement self-regulatory behavior and apply appropriate strategies for success.

Help students feel confident in their ability to learn and grow

Help students understand their giftedness.

Use
Specific,
Developmental
Compliments

Avoid Unnecessary Assistance

TIP

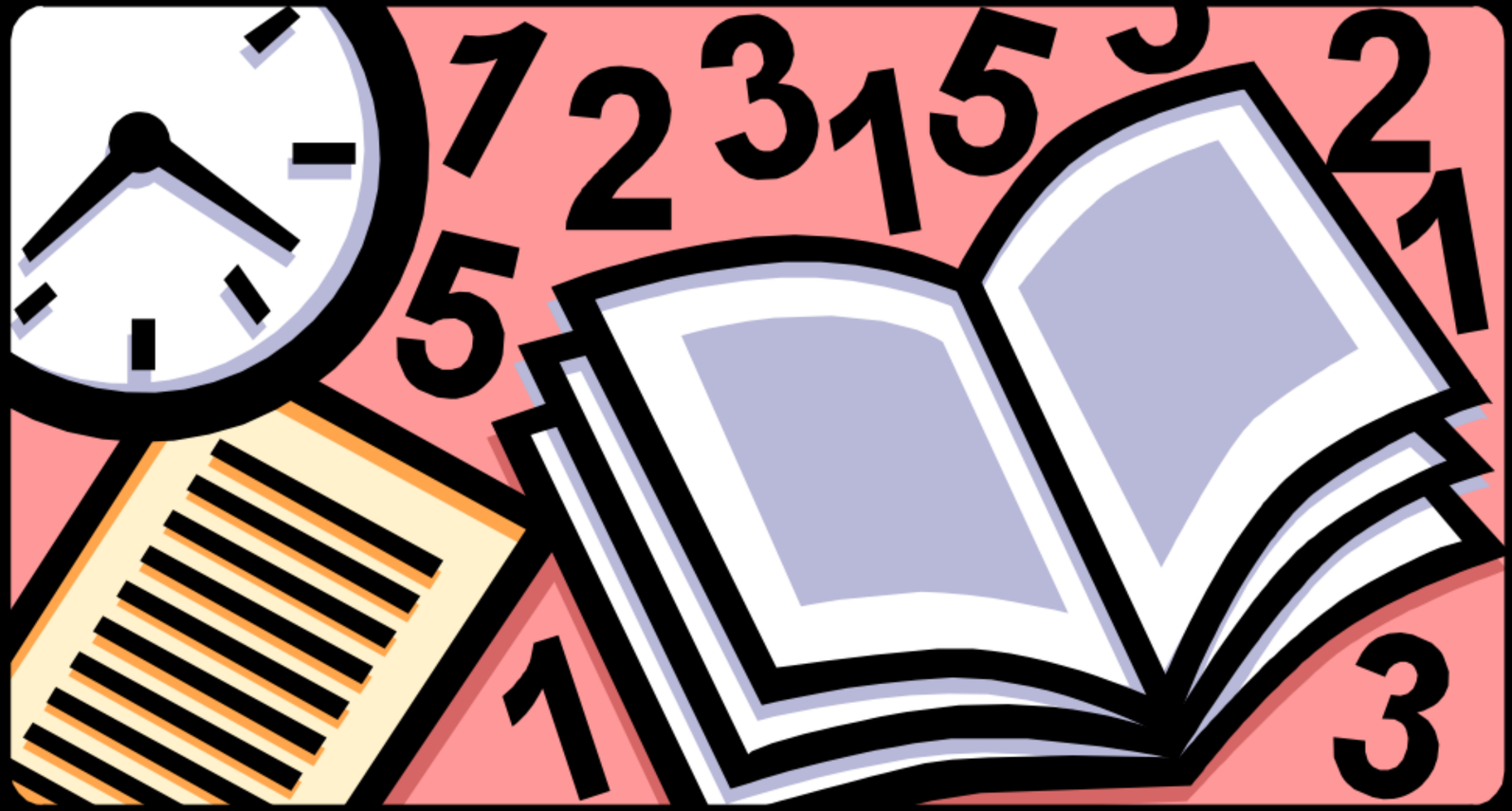
Document Growth

Month: _____ Year: _____

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

TIP

Create time capsules with short and long term aspirations.



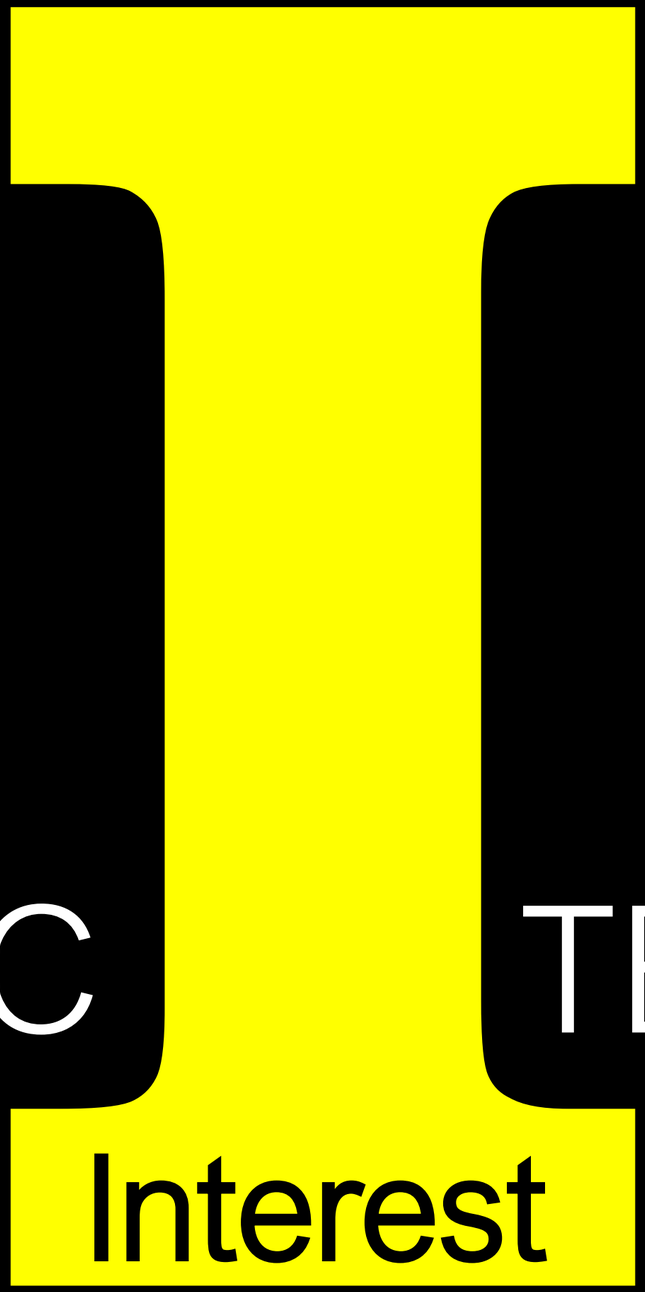
TIP

Share Your Objectives

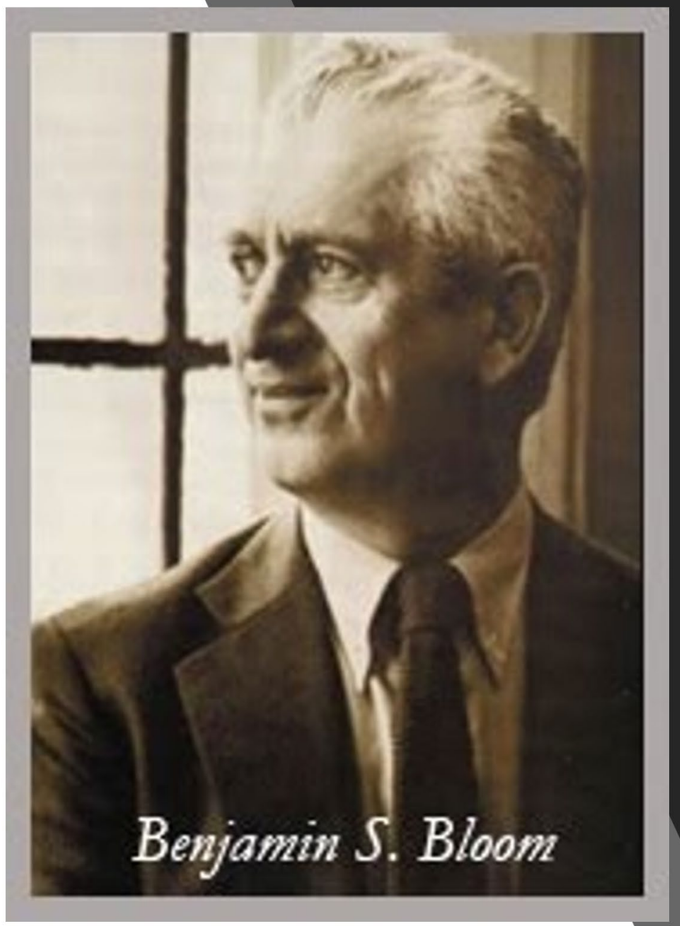
- **Begin lessons by listing and discussing the skills** that students have mastered from previous lessons.
- **Post the goals (skills) students will learn** during a new lesson.
- **Check off goals** as the lesson progresses.
- **At the end of a lesson, review the goals (skills)** which were achieved. Provide students time to reflect on what they learned.

Group Talk:

What has worked for you to increase student confidence?



Help students explore their interests and find meaning in tasks



Bloom's Findings on Talent Development

- Teach them to love the field
- Develop their skills and discipline
- Help them to make a unique contribution

Canon
Canon

choice

Our children are growing up in a world built around choice...

...having choices contributes to a sense of control and ownership.

Unfortunately

choice

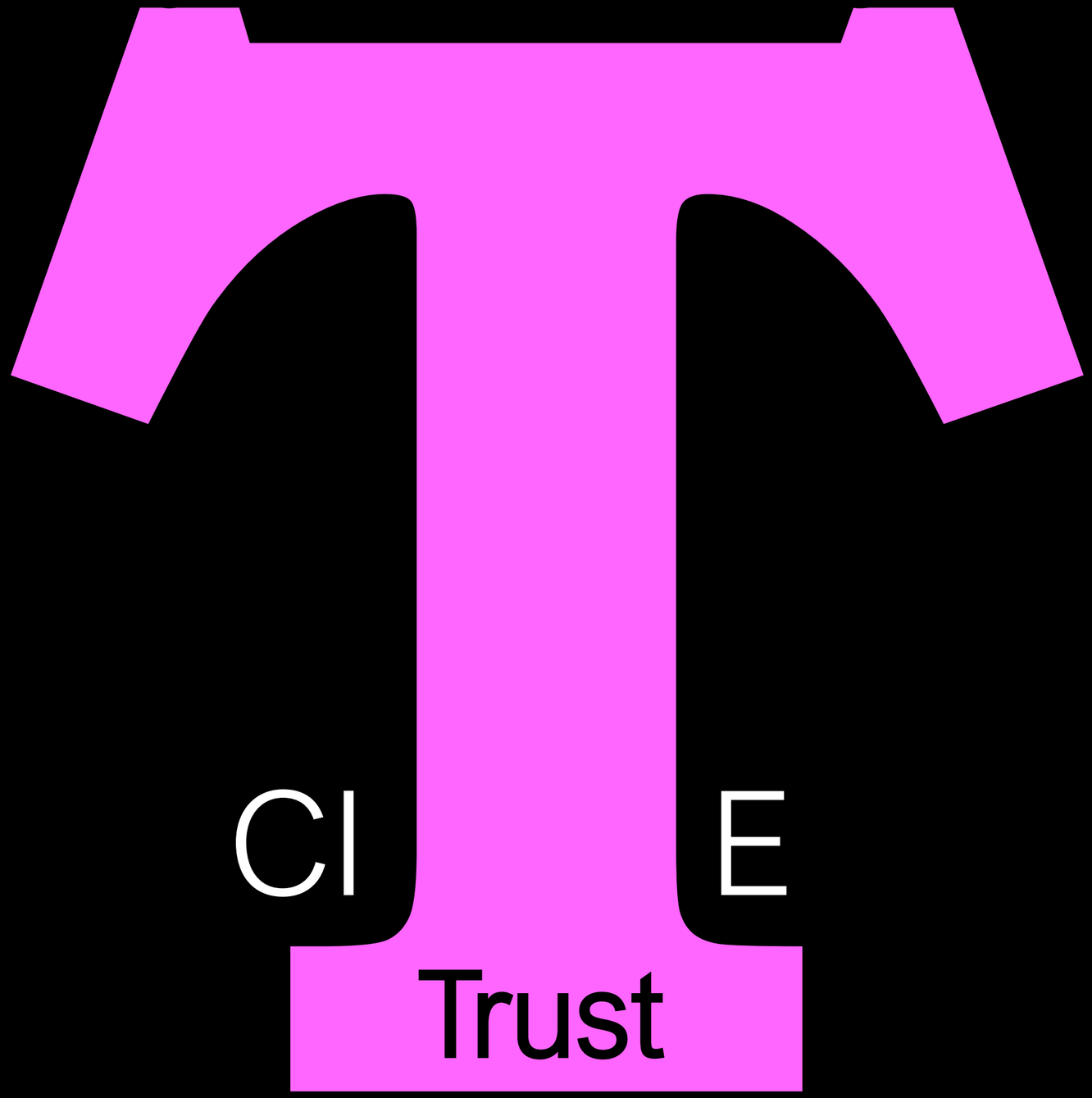
is absent or limited during most of the school day for many students

Enrichment Clusters Type IIIs

Interest

Group Talk:

How have you been able to incorporate student interests?



Help student trust taking risks?

- Provide opportunities to rework assignments
- Avoid placing too much emphasis on a single
- task
- Build in options for risk taking (e.g., best 3 out of 4)

five Cs

What gifted high school student s seek

- *control*
- *choices*
- *challenge*
- *complexity*
- *caring*

(Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003).

“I cannot separate the program from you.”

Jeremy

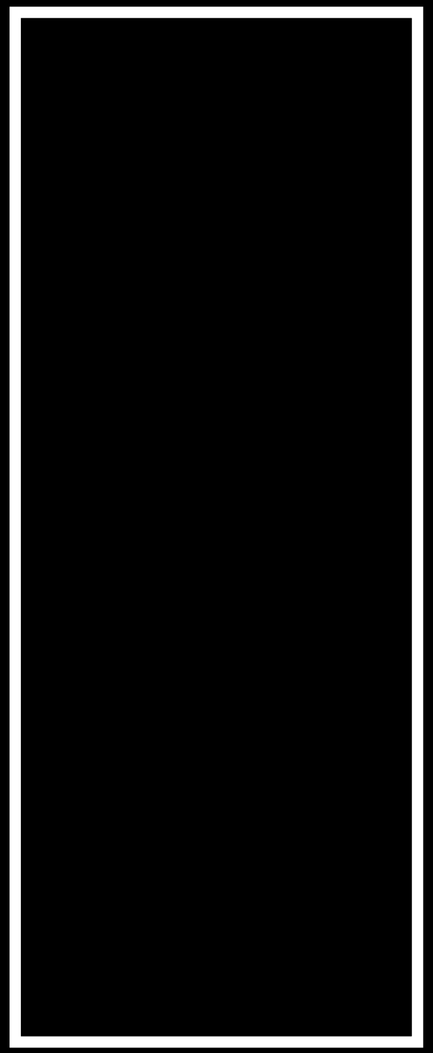
“How's life?”

Active Listening

“Thanks for helping me with my family problems.”

The future influences the present as much as the past.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche



Group Talk:

How do you provide a safe environment to take risks and grow?

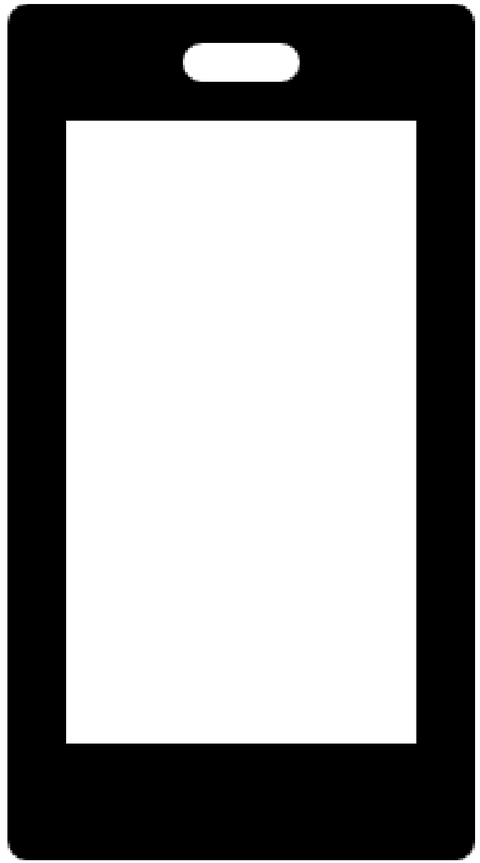
CIT

E

Engagement

Help students embrace challenges and engage

Discuss Options and Cause and Effect Relationships



“Did we study the right things?

What was on the test that we didn’t study?”

Success Involves

1. **Commitment to goals** during Goal-Setting

and

2. **Effective planning and enactment behaviors** during Goal-Striving

1. **Imagine the positive outcomes** associated with completing the goal
2. **Name critical obstacles**
3. **Develop implementation intentions** (if -- then --) that result in immediate, effortless unconscious actions to overcome the obstacles

Share control and responsibility.

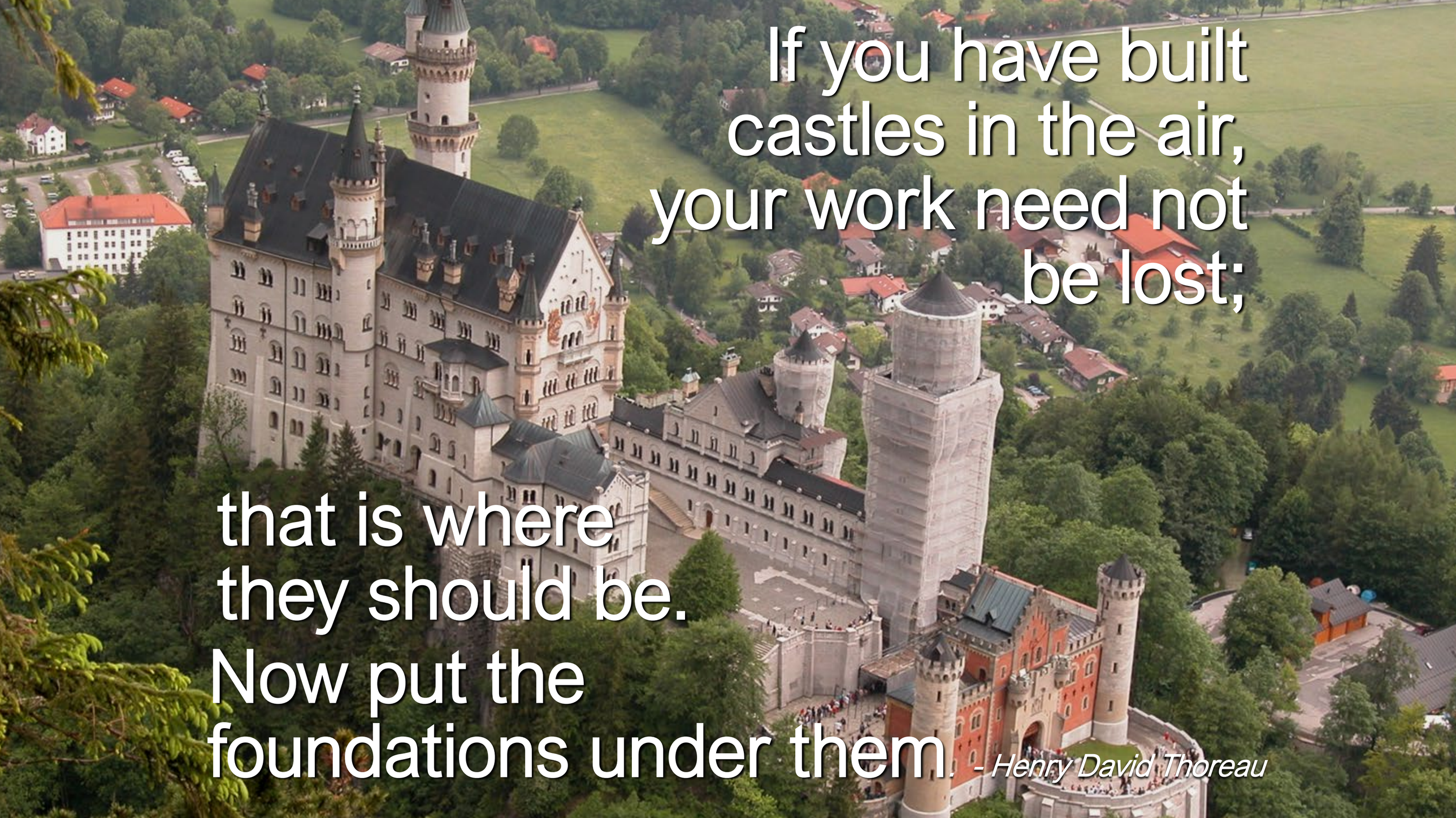
passion
urgency

“Passion is not a luxury, a frill, or a quality possessed by just a few teachers. It is essential to all good teaching”
(Day, 2004, p. 11).

“We cannot expect our children to become truly educated until we ensure that teachers know not only how to provide information but also how to spark the joy of learning”

(Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993, p. 195).

We all know kids who are brilliant but for one reason or another just don't seem to be able to get anything done.



- Henry David Thoreau

What are Executive Functioning (EF) Skills?

They are the things that enable us to get things done.

Schools have traditionally given precedence to aptitude and intelligence, but much modern research has found that **mere academic skills are not sufficient** in enabling students to reach their goals and potential.

Therefore, these "non-cognitive" EF skills are also necessary.

Why Do EF Skills Matter in Life?

- One EF skill – inhibition control – is positively related with better physical and mental health, salary, and happiness (Moffitt et al, 2011).
- EF skills are also important for job success (in terms of productivity and retaining one's job; Bailey, 2007) and marital stability (Eakin et al., 2004).
- Finally, people with better EF skills seem to enjoy a higher quality of life (e.g., Brown & Landgraf, 2010) and even live longer (Hall et al., 2010).

Why Do EF Skills Matter in school?

- Although there seems to be some relationship between intelligence and executive functioning, it is clear that some very intelligence people lack EF skills. In fact, some researchers have found that EF skills predict school success better even than IQ (e.g., Duckworth & Seligman, 2005).

- EF skills are important for school readiness; working memory and being able to control one's impulses predict both math and reading competence (Alloway & Alloway, 2010).

- Poor EF skills can interfere with building relationships with both teachers and peers (Raver & Knitzer, 2002).

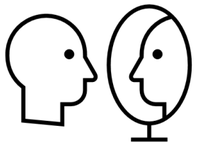
Renzulli Executive Functioning Scale (REFS)

7 DOMAINS

- Task Initiation

- Task Persistence

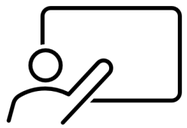
- Organization



- Self-reflection/ Awareness

- Emotional Regulation

- Collaboration



- Self-advocacy

Task Initiation

Brief Definition: The ability to get started, or to begin a task without procrastination

- I like starting new things.
- It's easy for me to get started on things.
- I hate having to start things.
- Beginning a task is hard for me.
- Starting something is hard for me.
- Finishing a task isn't hard, but starting is.
- It's hard to get started on tasks.

What suggestions do you have for helping students initiate tasks?

- Let them choose
- Write tasks down and break the task into smaller pieces. Start small.
- Work on anxiety
- Focus on values, not on feelings. (Don't wait until you feel like it). Know that momentum comes AFTER you get started.
- Timer
- Set a designated time and place
- Set goals
- Create a checklist
- Develop visual models
- Checking in; reminding them they can revise later
- Start anywhere
- Create a plan (plan steps)
- Get a buddy

Task Persistence

Definition: The ability to put continual effort towards a task-oriented goal. Stick-with-it-ness.

- I am able to stick with something even if I don't want to do it.
- I can only work on something for a short time.
- I finish what I start.
- I find it hard to stay on task.
- It’s hard for me to finish something that I’ve started.

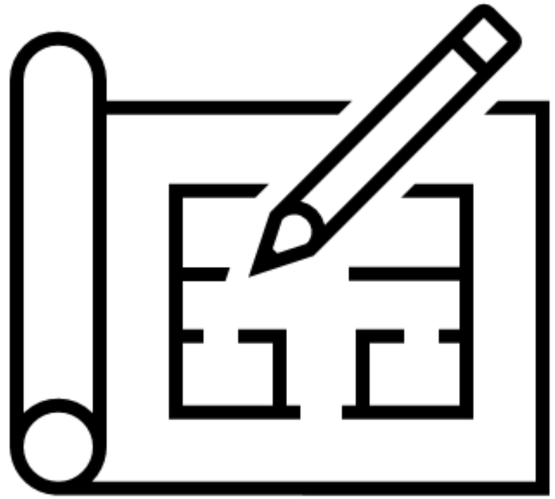
What suggestions do you have for helping students persist at tasks?

- Set a timer and work in focused bursts with breaks (Pomodoro Technique)
- Create barriers to distraction (physical and digital).
- Give yourself a deadline (Parkinson's Law)
- Set small goals to get excited about competition
- Offer reward tokens
- Provide praise and encouragement
- Give feedback for interim steps
- Use goal charts
- Work with student’s interests
- Beware of multi-tasking
- Recognize progress
- Organize sectioned binder
- Use music

Organization

Definition: The ability to put things in order, plan, manage time, and monitor one's progress.

- My desk is clean and organized.
- I have designated places for things.
- I put things in order based on when they are due.
- I keep a list of things I need to do.
- I can find things when I need them.
- I put things back when I am done with them.
- I lose stuff all the time.
- I never lose anything.
- I don't have a set place for my things.
- I never turn things in late because I know when they are due.



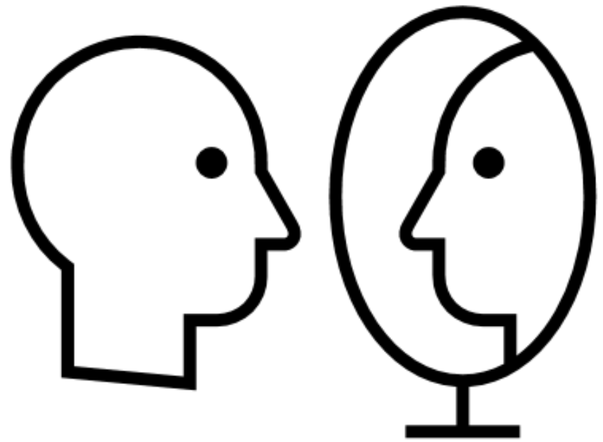
What suggestions do you have for helping students organize?

- Keep systems simple!
- Color code tasks
- Talk about organization and its importance.
- Model it: Show what a desk free of clutter look like
- Alexa reminders
- Develop daily checklists
- Display classroom schedules
- Set aside a place for everything
- Have students make planners and binders (folders)…but TEACH it to them! It's not inherent for all.
- Use a Calendar
- Create task lists
- Labeled portfolios
- Build clean-up and reflection time into class.
- Build the school-home connection

Self-Reflection/Awareness

Definition: The ability to recognize and understand one's strengths and weaknesses.

- I am aware of my weaknesses.
- I know what I can do well.
- I know what I need to improve about myself.
- I know what I can do to improve.
- I reflect on what goes well.
- I understand my strengths.



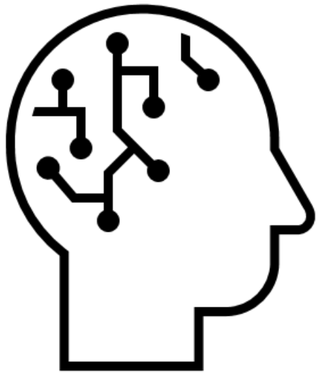
What suggestions do you have for helping students be more self-aware?

- Tune into body
- Encourage self-talk
- Hold student conference
- Quick polls - rate your understanding or how you are feelilng on scale of 1-4
- Use peer review
- Tune into feelings
- Time tracking
- Grade their own work with a rubric
- Reflection on strengths/area want to improve before a task/project
- Reflect on what went well/biggest strength/something would like to improve after a task
- Set goals for the day
- Journal

Emotional Regulation

Definition: The ability to sense and manage emotions.

- I know how to lower my stress level.
- When I am angry, it talks a long time for me to calm down.
- I can calm myself down when I am upset.
- When things don’t go well, I can remain calm.
- I get stressed for a long time, which gets in the way of my goals.
- I know when I’m getting anxious and can control it.
- When I'm upset, I can't stop thinking about what upset me.
- I can feel calm when I need to.



What suggestions do you have for helping students emotionally regulate?

- Take breaks
- Allow for a variety of feelings
- Encourage movement
- Listen to quiet music
- Conduct mindfulness exercises
- Social stories
- Reserve time and place to calm down
- Practice breathing (in for 3 seconds and out for 6 seconds)
- Tense muscles and then relax them
- Close eyes and send a mental command to each part of the body to relax (feet, legs, torso, arms, neck and head)
- Control stressful thoughts by identifying them, stopping them, breathing 3 x 6, and thinking about something relaxing

Collaboration

Definition: The ability to work well with others in groups, especially on common projects or tasks.

- I am willing to compromise with others.
- I don’t like working with my classmates.
- I listen to other people's ideas.
- I work well with others.
- I am patient with others.

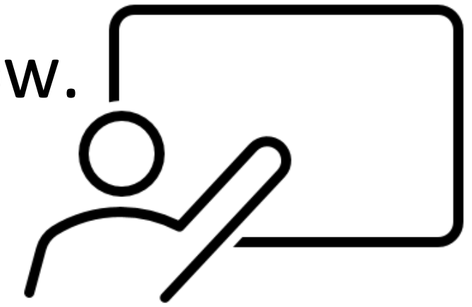
What suggestions do you have for helping students be more collaborative?

- Share thoughts
- Listen
- Turn and talk
- Teach how to divide up tasks
- Use sentence frames
- Develop leadership roles
- Implement Kagan strategies that encourage cooperation and communication
- Use flexible grouping
- Conduct team builders
- Jigsaw classroom learning
- Teach how to actively listen to other's ideas
- Encourage involvement in extracurriculars/social activities
- Help raise awareness of context
- Teach need to sometimes "fake" interest

Self-Advocacy

Definition: The ability to communicate one's needs and wants and to make decisions about the support need.

- If something feels unfair, I let someone know.
- I am not afraid to stand up for myself.
- If I don't understand something, I raise my hand and ask the teacher.
- I let people know what I want.
- I ask my parents or teacher for what I need.
- When people do things that bother me, I let them know.
- It is hard for me to ask a teacher for help.
- I'm uncomfortable asking for help.



What suggestions do you have for helping students self-advocate?

- Develop knowledge of self and how to communicate
- Review how to properly approach/contact a teacher
- Discuss rights
- Locate a trusted adult
- Learn to recognize and appreciate accomplishments
- Use sentence starters
- Role play skills in assertiveness
- Participation in IEP meeting (if applicable)
- Help accept making mistakes and using them as learning tools

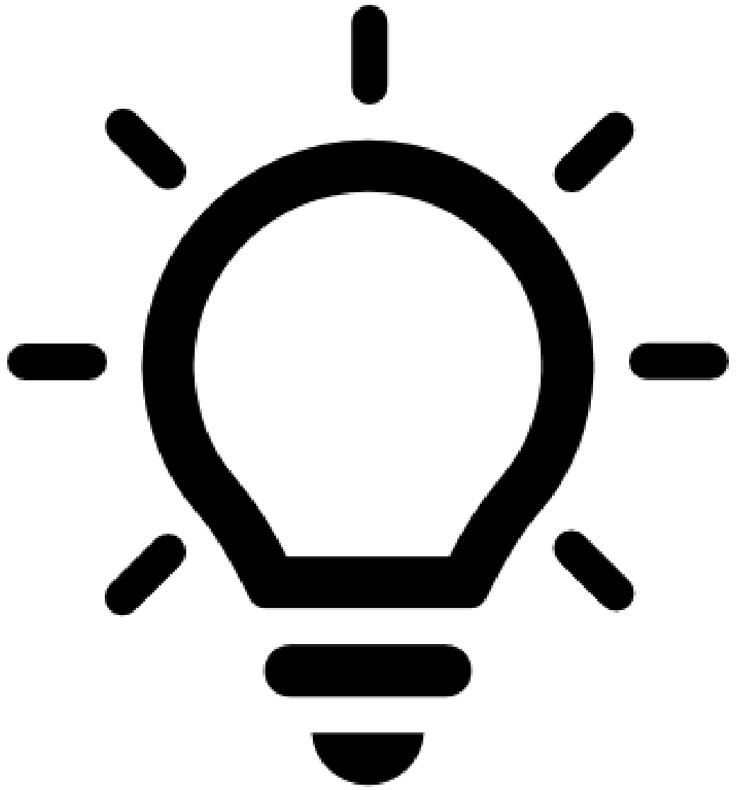
Too Passive
"Maybe if I sit here and do nothing, the teacher will notice and give me a pencil"

Effective Self-Advocacy
" Excuse me, Mr. Burrell. May I borrow a pencil?"

Too Aggressive:
"Give me a pencil right now!"

How knowing students' executive functioning strengths and weaknesses can benefit teachers, students, parents, and administrators

- Use to understand and address underperformance issues
- Help put students' behaviors in perspective
- Use to improve communication
- Use to design and assess effectiveness of EF programs (e.g., SEL, Study Skills)



Where am I going?
Get going!
Organization
Task Initiation
Task Persistence
Emotional Regulation
Collaboration
Self-advocacy
Self-reflection/ Awareness
How's it going?
Keep going!

How to support UConn's work in EF...

Online survey for students with built-in parent and student permission.
https://s.uconn.edu/refs

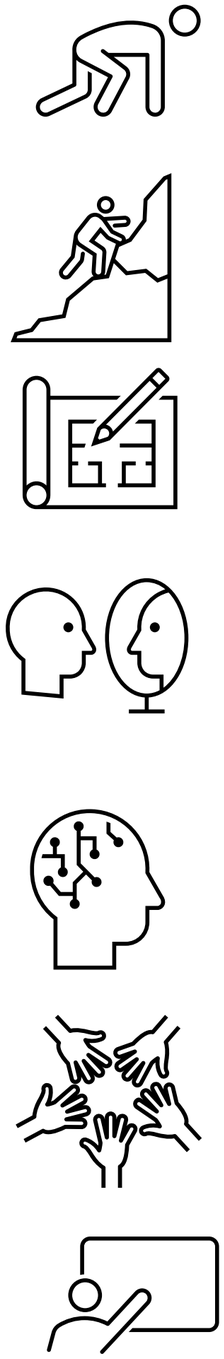
Online form for teachers to obtain principal permission to share survey with students' parents.
https://s.uconn.edu/renzulliscale

s.uconn.edu/adultrefs

7

Renzulli Executive Functioning Scale (REFS)

DOMAINS

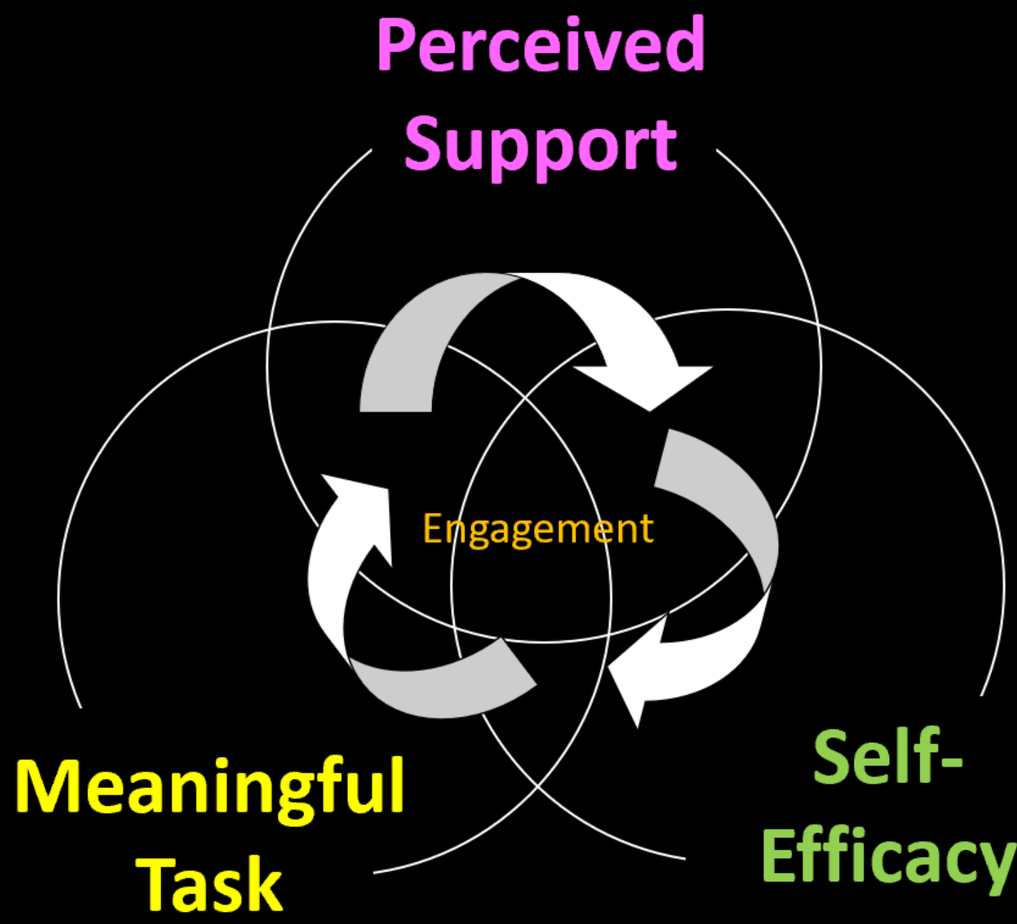


- Task Initiation
- Task Persistence
- Organization
- Self-reflection/ Awareness
- Emotional Regulation
- Collaboration
- Self-advocacy

Engagement

Group Talk:

How do you get students engaged?



Confidence: I am capable!

Interest: It's important to me!

Trust: I have what I need and feel supported!

Engage: I am ready to do it!

When
placed in
appropriate
environments,
all living
things
flourish.

Every single person makes a difference every single day.

- Jane Goodall

You make the difference every single day.

"...life is an occasion.
Rise to it."

— Suzanne Weyn, Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium

Lead a creative life

Take risks

Don't be afraid to defy the crowd

Take a second, a third, a fourth look...see the uniqueness in each thing as well as the commonality across all things

Fall in love with what you are doing knowing there is value in everything and everyone

“I am only one,
But still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
but still I can do something;
And because I cannot do everything
I will not refuse to do
the something
that I can do.”

- Edward E. Hale