Parent Session

Motivation, Enthusiasm and Underachievement

for

Twice-Exceptional Children

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PROJECT2EXCEL

University of St. Thomas
PARENT DISCUSSION

Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement

What: Guided discussion group for parents whose children are participating in PROJECT2EXCEL.

When: Day, Date, 2010
       7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Where: Your School
       Your School Address

Facilitators: Your choice

Preparation: Pre-reading assignment attached
            Chapter 4, “Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement,” A Parent’s Guide to Gifted Children,
            James T. Webb, et al., 2007

Potential Topics: Motivation
                  Enthusiasm
                  Underachievement

Essential Questions:
1. What motivates people?
2. How do you channel enthusiasm for learning?
3. What are some of the roots of underachievement?

Objective: Establish an environment in which parents of twice-exceptional children can receive and provide support, guidance, and professional advice through discussion with other parents and trained leaders.
### Discussion Notes

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<td>• Share ideas from the reading</td>
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<td>Motivation</td>
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<td>• Your child?</td>
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<td>Motivational Paralysis</td>
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<td>• Break the cycle (no shame!)</td>
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*Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement*
Rules for the Road

- “At the end of each day, write down the constructive criticism (and the process praise) you’ve given your kids.” (Dweck, pp 211)

- Use the coulda, woulda, shouldas as rehearsal for tomorrow. Come up with some strategies that you might use the next time a particular scenario arises.

- Do use process praise; “I like how you tried several ways to solve that tricky math problem!” This shows that you appreciate the effort your child is putting into his work. Don’t praise natural ability; “You are so good at math – I knew you would figure it out!” How will the child feel when she comes across a problem she can’t solve?

- Discover what your child’s goals for himself are. Work to find common ground between his goals and your goals for him. If he wants to be an astronaut and you want him to get good grades, help him see that doing well in school is part of what it takes to become an astronaut. He doesn’t have to take your word on it! Visit http://www.nasa.gov/about/career/index.html

- Find mentors, coaches, teachers that will help your child explore the world through her area of interest. She can learn about science, geography, and mathematics, and hone her research skills while learning everything there is to know about pandas.

- How can you show that you value your child’s strengths and interests? Is your child a visual/spatial learner and good with a map? Let him be the guide on your next outing. If you wind up taking a wrong turn, help him get back on track and show him you trust him by giving him the lead again. Is she terrific at drawing three-dimensional objects? Let her help draw out the new layout you are thinking of for the living room. Does she have a different idea about where the table should go? Give her input value and consider her suggestion, even if you don’t end up using it.

- Give your child responsibility for his success or failure wherever you can. Let him know that you are there for him, and that you love and value him even when he fails at something. (Sometimes we need to say these things out loud!) If he has a setback, help him plan a better strategy for next time.

- Keep your expectations high, and make sure your child has the strategies and support necessary to meet those expectations. Instead of ‘sink or swim’, provide your child with flotation devices. Over time, she’ll develop her swimming skills and need less external support. In some areas that are rougher water for her, she may always wear a life jacket – that’s okay! That’s what they’re for!

Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement
Food for Thought

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Goals are the fuel in the furnace of achievement.
Brian Tracy, Eat that Frog

They can because they think they can.
Virgil

Keep steadily before you the fact that all true success depends at last upon yourself.
Theodore T. Hunger

We are all motivated by a keen desire for praise, and the better a man is, the more he is inspired
to glory.
Cicero

Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.
Albert Einstein

“Kid, you’ll move mountains! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting.
So...Get on your way!
Dr. Seuss

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different
drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.
Henry David Thoreau

Humanity can be quite cold to those who see the world differently.
Eric A. Burns, Gossamer Commons

It’s not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what’s required.
Sir Winston Churchill

A goal without a plan is just a wish.
Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement
The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don’t define them, or ever seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them.

Deans Watley

To repeat what others have said requires education; to challenge it requires brains.

Mary Pettibone Poole, *A Glass eye at a Keyhole*

Only the curious will learn and only the resolute overcome the obstacles to learning. The quest quotient has always excited me more than the intelligence quotient.

Eugene S. Wilson

Mistakes are the portals of discovery.

James Joyce

Gifted children with learning disabilities who are seen as defective, in constant need of remediation, come to view themselves with shame and doubt... But when those closest to them honor their strengths and believe in their ability to fulfill their dreams, they are able to mobilize their will to succeed against all odds.

Linda Silverman

I loved feeling special. I hated feeling special.

Garrison Keillor

Nine tenths of education is encouragement.

Anatole France

Do not train children to learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.

Plato

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.

Chinese Proverb

*Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement*
Discussion Questions for the Facilitator

As facilitator of the discussion, the questions to be asked are numbered. Questions and anecdotes in italics are secondary and to be used as conversation starters if necessary.

Prior to tackling the questions of the night, perhaps the facilitator would like to ask parents to introduce themselves and share what brought them to this discussion group.

The facilitator begins by sharing the following story with the group:

There's More Than One Way to Say... “Let's Get Going”

Option 1: Alec’s father says, “Why isn’t the lawn mowed? How many times do I have to remind you? The grass is up past my ankles. The neighbors are going to complain it looks like a jungle out there. How are you ever going to succeed in life if you can’t get things done?” Dad’s manner is frustrated and confrontational.

Option 2: Alec’s dad pulls out two cold sodas from the refrigerator, hands one to Alec, and leads him outside to the garage. He has Alec sit on the riding mower and says, “It can be tricky to get this started. Remember to pull the choke out, and adjust the seat so it’s comfortable. Are you going to start along the back fence or along the driveway? It’s up to you; you’re old enough to make that decision for yourself.” His manner is calm and friendly, and assumes that Alec will comply. He pats Alec on the back and periodically calls out, “Looks good.”

Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement
Discussion Questions

I. Motivation

1. What gets in the way of motivation?
   a. Attitude?
   b. Time?
   c. Unchallenging work?
   d. Messages sent?

2. Why wouldn’t a gifted child be motivated?
   a. Do we expect them to be motivated at the same level for everything they do?
   b. Do we expect them to be motivated all the time?
   c. Does health influence level of motivation?
   d. Does family situation influence level of motivation?
   e. Does student/teacher relationship influence level of motivation?
   f. Does time of day influence level of motivation?
   g. Do peers influence level of motivation?

3. Is a child really unmotivated?
   a. Are issues of twice-exceptionality interfering with level of motivation?
   b. Is schoolwork challenging?
   c.

4. What motivates people?
   a. What motivates you?
   b. What motivates your child?
   c. Do the same things motivate everyone?

5. What do you do when your own motivation isn’t 100%?
   a. Do you forge on?
   b. Do you take a break?
   c. Do you chastise yourself?

6. What does your child see as important? Why?
   a. Do you know what is important to your child?
   b. Do you agree with what is important to your child?
   c. Do you understand why those things your child deems important are important to him or her?

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7. Talk about your child’s peer group. How do you think friends affect motivation?
   a. Are your child’s friends highly motivated?
   b. As your child gets older, do you see changes in the effect friends’ motivation has on him or her?

II. Enthusiasm

1. What is your child’s “happy place” when he or she is most enthusiastic?
   a. What are your child’s passions?
   b. When is your child most focused?
   c. Is there a time or place required for the child to enthusiastically embrace something?

2. Does your enthusiasm direct your child’s activities?
   a. I’ll never forget her first day of kindergarten... She was so excited she was almost vibrating. She couldn’t wait to get in the schoolhouse door. I was eager to have her go to school because, frankly, she was wearing me out. (She) was a whirlwind of energy who never stopped talking or questioning.”
   b. Do you wish your child would be enthusiastic about those things you enjoy?
   c. Can you be enthusiastic about those things your child enjoys?

III. Underachievement

1. What are the expectations for achievement within the family?
   a. What could happen if expectations are too high?
   b. What could happen if expectations are too low?
   c. Who determines the appropriateness of expectations?

2. What are your goals for your child?
   a. Short-term goals?
   b. Long-term goals?

3. What are your child’s goals for himself or herself?
   a. Short-term goals?
   b. Long-term goals?

4. How does your child feel about being gifted? Is it a burden or a blessing?
   a. Garrison Keillor once said, “I loved feeling special. I hated feeling special.”
   b. How does your child indicate how he or she feels about being gifted?

5. Do you see intelligence as fixed, or something that can be developed?
   a. What part might this view play on your child’s achievement?
   b. Do you communicate your view to your child?
WAYS TO BE MORE MOTIVATED AND ENTHUSIASTIC

1. Fake it till you make it
2. Allow for spontaneity
3. Build an encouragement folder
4. Lighten up!
5. Read motivational books or inspirational thoughts before going to sleep or before school in the morning
6. Practice kindness
7. Write down good ideas the moment you think of them
8. Improve your work space at home and at school
9. Listen to uplifting music
10. Compliment someone
11. Set goals that move and inspire you
12. Create a new bulletin board or display in your bedroom with pictures of people you admire
13. Solve a problem (and add the solution to your bulletin board)
14. Don’t spend much time with friends who don’t care about anything
15. Cut out funny cartoons or stories and paste them in a scrapbook to look at when you need a boost
16. Keep a bulletin board by your desk and post happy things
17. Keep a journal where you write down the funny or nice things said or done by people (can be friends, family, or total strangers)
18. Smile all day no matter what happens and see how it affects other people
19. When you get angry, sing or hum a tune that makes you smile
20. Keep track of times when you feel good about yourself
21. Set a goal that you can reach every day for one month.
22. Don’t try to change everything all at once. Work on one thing at a time.
23. Tell yourself every day that you are a good person and will try to learn something new
24. Be patient when everything doesn’t go your way
25. Teach someone else how to do something

Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement
Further Reading

Books:


“Motivation and self-efficacy are discussed. Without these, even the best IEP and school accommodations may fail. Effective classroom practices and community support are also detailed. Every educator and parent of a twice-exceptional student should read this book, and keep it close at hand during identification and annual IEP review.”


“Initiation-Organizing thoughts well enough to get started on a task - Flexibility-Learning to adapt as situations unfold - Attention-Focusing long enough to retain important information - Organization-Managing space to promote forward momentum - Planning-Managing time - Working memory-Memorizing information long enough for it to be learned - Self-awareness-Having both sufficient self-knowledge and an understanding of how one is seen by others - Regulating emotions-Expressing feelings in proportion to the events that elicited them. Discussing each skill in detail, Dr. Cox offers tools and techniques to enhance every child's capability, including children diagnosed with special needs.”


“No parent thinks “I wonder what I can do today to undermine my children, subvert their effort, turn them off learning, and limit their achievement.” Of course not. They think “I would do anything, give anything, to make my children successful.” Yet many of the things they do boomerang. Their helpful judgments, their lessons, their motivating techniques often send the wrong message. In fact, every word and action sends a message. It tells children – or students or athletes – how to think about themselves. It can be a fixed mindset message that says: “You have permanent traits and I’m judging them.” Or it can be a growth mindset message that says: “You are a developing person and I am interested in your development”...”


“Written with help from hundreds of gifted teenagers, The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide is the ultimate guide to surviving and thriving in a world that doesn't always value, support, or understand high ability. Full of surprising facts, step-by-step strategies, and practical how-tos, and inspiring quotations, featuring insightful essays contributed by gifted young people and adults, The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide gives the gifted young reader the tools needed to understand their

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giftedness, accept it as an asset, and use it to make the most of who and what they are. Of special value is the section on dealing with a troubled gifted youngster contemplating suicide, how to "net smart" and have safe, fun online relations, and how to handle teen angst. Incidentally, The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide is also very valuable reading for the parents, teachers, and counselors of gifted kids as well!" -- Midwest Book Review


"Being excluded from peers can be confusing, even for the brightest young minds. Now in a revised, updated, and expanded third edition, The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: For Ages 10 & Under is a guide for young gifted and talented children who may not think their talents are a gift. With much advice for young people about understanding their gifts and learning that being brainy is not a detriment, The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide is the perfect gift for the under-confident and over-skilled young reader." -- The Midwest Book Review, Reviewer's Choice


"Here’s help for all underachievers, plus their frustrated parents and teachers! This step-by-step program, proven successful in schools, tells you exactly what to do to break the failure chain."


"The basic strategy we use for raising children, teaching students, and managing workers can be summarized in six words: Do this and you’ll get that. We dangle goodies (from candy bars to sales commissions) in front of people in much the same way we train the family pet. Drawing on a wealth of psychological research, Alfie Kohn points the way to a more successful strategy based on working with people instead of doing things to them. “Do rewards motivate people?” asks Kohn. “Yes. They motivate people to get rewards.” Seasoned with humor and familiar examples, Punished By Rewards presents an argument unsettling to hear but impossible to dismiss."


"Forget everything you thought you knew about how to motivate people— at work, at school, at home. It’s wrong. As Daniel H. Pink explains in his now and paradigm- shattering book Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us, the secret to high performance and satisfaction in today’s world is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world. Drawing on four decades of scientific research on human motivation, Pink exposes the mismatch between what science knows and what business does—and how that affects every aspect of our lives. He demonstrates that while the old-fashioned carrot-and-stick approach worked successfully in the 20th century, it’s precisely the wrong way to motivate people for today’s challenges. In Drive, he reveals the three elements of true motivation:

*Autonomy-* the desire to direct our own lives
*Mastery-* the urge to get better and better at something that matters
*Purpose-* the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves"


"All individuals have the ability to learn and attain self-fulfillment; however, many children are at risk of failing to achieve their academic potential. . ."

Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement

"Raising a gifted child is both a joy and a challenge, yet parents of gifted children have few resources for reliable parenting information. The four authors, who have decades of professional experience with gifted children and their families, provide practical guidance in areas such as: Characteristics of gifted children; Peer relations; Sibling issues; Motivation & underachievement; Discipline issues; Intensity & stress; Depression & unhappiness; Educational planning; Parenting concerns; Finding professional help; and much, much more!"

**Articles**


*Motivation, Enthusiasm, and Underachievement*
SESSION EVALUATION

Please take a few moments to let us know if this was useful to you or if there are changes you would like to see in the next session.

1. What were one or two techniques discussed that will be useful to you?

2. Was this session what you expected it to be? In what ways was it better? In what ways was it worse?

3. What subjects were broached that you would like to explore more?

4. What changes would you suggest we implement for the next session?

5. How frequently would you attend these sessions if they were offered?

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