PROJECT2EXCEL

Parent Session

Underachievement

in

Twice-Exceptional Children

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PROJECT2EXCEL

University of St. Thomas
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Boredom: A Surprisingly Interesting Topic, by Aimee Yermish

Stones Across the River: an Analogy on the Twice-Exceptional Child and School, by Deborah J. Paquette

Discussion Notes-- a graphic organizer for note-taking during discussion

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Underachievement
Parent Discussion

on

Underachievement

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

When: Day, Month, Year
6:30-8:30pm

Where:

Facilitators:

Preparation: Pre-reading assignment attached;

Boredom: A Surprisingly Interesting Topic, by Aimee Yermish

Stones Across the River: an Analogy on the Twice-Exceptional Child and School, by Deborah J. Paquette

Potential Topics: Underachievement

Essential Questions:

1. My child is so smart! Why isn’t school easy for him?
2. What causes underachievement?
3. How can I help my child work up to her ability?

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

1. What's said in the group stays in the group.
2. There are no wrong ideas.
3. Stay on topic.
4. The facilitator is the guide, not the expert.
### Discussion Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Strategies to try</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From the readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What do you already do?</td>
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<td>• What do you want to try?</td>
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<td>• Share ideas from the reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In what areas does your child achieve at his potential?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In what areas does she underachieve?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What are your child's expectations for himself?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What are your expectations for him?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Where do you agree?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Underachievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What are some possible underlying reasons for her underachievement?</td>
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<td>• Can you identify triggers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Where does your child fall on the boredom continuum?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What have you already tried?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What has your child's teacher tried?</td>
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<td>• Any new ideas from tonight?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Any ‘wheelbarrows or bridges’ you will try?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Further reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Other resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Related topics</td>
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*Underachievement*
Discussion Directions for the Facilitator

The facilitator of the discussion may use the numbered questions to guide the discussion. Lettered prompts beneath the questions can be used to prompt discussion as needed. The Rules for the Road section also offers questions and ideas for discussion.

Parents may use the Discussion Notes form for taking notes

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

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

For the past year, Maria has had reading problems. Her teacher reports that she is falling behind in class. Maria’s mother and father encourage her to read for fun (and, they hope, develop her skills). But whenever they suggest a trip to the library, they meet with resistance. Maria doesn’t want to go to the library. Reading, she insists, is “boring.”

Manuel doesn’t understand why his parents and teachers won’t leave him alone. He gets mostly C’s, but he’s perfectly satisfied—after all, that’s average, isn’t it? But the adults keep insisting that he could do better. His achievement scores are always high, they remind him, and he could probably get straight A’s if he tried. The trouble is, he doesn’t want to.

However, he does want to go to camp this summer, and his parents have made it clear to him that this year, camp will depend on improvement in his grades. When his final report card comes in, they’re pleased to see that Manuel has gotten all A’s and B’s.

Yolanda has seen herself as a scientist since age three, when she first became fascinated with dinosaurs. Her science passion consumes all of her free time, as well as any unplanned moments in school. Her teachers often find her absorbed in her projects, collections, and readings during her other academic subjects. Despite their efforts, they are unable to channel Yolanda’s energy or attention toward learning anything else.

From Up From Underachievement, by Diane Heacox
Discussion Questions

Underachievement means to perform below potential or expectations.

1. How has your child’s potential been identified?
   a. School testing
   b. Outside testing
   c. Teacher observation
   d. Parent observation
2. Have all of the measures of potential been in agreement?
3. Do you see potential not measured by testing?
4. Has your child’s achievement (or underachievement) been consistent?
5. If changes in achievement have occurred, can you think of a trigger? School change, family change, etc.
6. Is your child’s area of underachievement related to an area of strength or weakness?
7. What is your child’s attitude toward not working up to expectations?
8. What have you based your expectations on?
9. What strategies have you tried to counteract your child’s underachievement?
   a. What might be potential ‘wheelbarrow’ for a child who can’t remember her times tables?
   b. Tutoring
   c. Change of schedule
10. Do you reward academic success? If so, how? Does it work?
11. What do you do to help your child in her area of underachievement?
12. What ‘wheelbarrows’ have you found helpful at home with homework tasks?
13. Are you working with your child’s teacher? How is that going?
14. What is important to your child?
15. What is important to you?
16. Do you understand your child’s priorities?
17. Does your child understand your priorities for him?
18. What are some points from the reading that resonate with you? Why?
19. Where do you think your child falls on the boredom continuum described by Aimee Yermish in her article?
20. What would this suggest you do if one of the points on this continuum is your child’s reason for claiming that something is boring?
21. What strategies do you think you want to try based on tonight’s discussion?
Food for Thought

“I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it.” ~ Harry Truman

“Problems worthy of attack, prove their worth by hitting back.” ~ Piet Hein

“The habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties.” ~ Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, January 19, 1780

“Achievement is largely the product of steadily raising one’s level of aspiration and expectation.” ~ Jack Nicklaus

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.” ~ Dr. Seuss

“Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person’s character lies in their own hands.” ~ Anne Frank

“There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal people.” ~ Thomas Jefferson

“You cannot teach anybody anything. You can only help them discover it within themselves.” ~ Galileo

“The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of mind.” ~ William James

Underachievement
Further Reading

Books


“...provides a humorous, engaging, and encouraging look at raising gifted children today. Dr. James R. Delisle offers practical, down-to-earth advice that will cause parents to reexamine the ways they perceive and relate to their children. Delisle puts forward 10 tips to parents of gifted children—ideas that reflect attitude more than action and allow for introspection and change, rather than quick, do-it-tonight solutions.”

Delisle, J.R. (2002). *When gifted kids don't have all the answers: How to meet their social and emotional needs.* Waco, Texas: Prufrock Press, Inc.

Gifted kids are so much more than test scores and grades. Still, it’s sometimes difficult to see past all that achievement and potential to the child, adolescent, or teen who may be filled with anxiety, pressured to be perfect, lonely, alienated, confused, and unsure of what the future might bring. Written for teachers, gifted coordinators, guidance counselors, and other adults working with gifted kids (including parents), this book offers proven, practical suggestions for encouraging social and emotional growth among gifted, talented, and creative children and youth.”


“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 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 be "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

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"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


"The teen years are some of the more stressful in people’s lives—high school, hormones raging, preparing for the future. Now in a fully revised and informatively updated new edition, "Fighting Invisible Tigers: Stress Management for Teens" is a guide book for teenagers who need to reduce stress in their hectic lives. "Fighting Invisible Tigers" outlines ten techniques that will assist teens in their desire to control their stress, such as breathing and relaxation exercises, time management, dealing with hostile peers/family/friends, and embracing an optimistic outlook. A top pick for community library parenting collections." —Midwest Book Review


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**


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