

NEWS FROM ACADEMICALLY GIFTED

The Middle School Edition

Quarter 4

What You May Notice Right Now... and How to Respond

As the school year comes to a close, academically gifted students may show a range of behaviors. Some may remain highly engaged, while others may seem less motivated or more easily frustrated. While these responses can be common this time of year, they are also opportunities for growth and guidance.

- **Decreased Motivation** – Mental fatigue or a lack of challenge can impact engagement
- **Perfectionism or Avoidance** – Tasks may feel overwhelming unless they can be done perfectly
- **Increased Frustration** – Especially if work feels repetitive or no longer meaningful
- **Desire for Independence** – Wanting more control over how and when work is completed

How You Can Support at Home:

- Reinforce the importance of **finishing strong and following through on commitments**
- Focus on **progress and effort**, while still holding high expectations
- Help your child **set priorities and manageable goals**
- Encourage **balance**, while ensuring responsibilities remain a priority

🌟 *These moments are not just challenges—they are opportunities to build perseverance, responsibility, and confidence.*

As you begin thinking about summer, this is a great opportunity to re-engage your child's curiosity and love of learning. Be sure to explore the enrichment opportunities below to help them stay challenged, discover new interests, and continue growing beyond the classroom.

- For select rising 9th grade students, the AG Department sponsors the Academic All-Star Camp. Students selected to participate will receive a notification sent home by the school's TAG Chair during the week of April 13th. Please contact Kelly Woody, AG Coordinator, with any questions (woodyk@gcsnc.com).
- Listed below are several regional enrichment opportunities available this summer. Some camps are available for current middle school students while others are specific to rising 9th–12th grade students. Please note that except for those listed as "GCS", these programs have not been vetted nor endorsed by Guilford County Schools. You can use the link or QR code below to access more information about these summer enrichment opportunities.

- Community Theatre of Greensboro & GCS Summer Arts Institute
- GCS Academic All-Star Camp (Select Rising 9th Graders)
- Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) Titan Tech Camps
- iDTech Camps at Davidson College, NC State, and UNC-Chapel Hill
- NC A&T Summer Enrichment Camps
- UNCG Summer Enrichment Camps
- GCS Summer Arts Institute

Link:

<https://tinyurl.com/SummerEnrich2026>

QR Code:



Perfectionism

Parents and teachers of gifted children often express frustration with the impossible expectations that their children hold for themselves.

Perfectionism affects many populations, but poses special concerns for gifted students. Many gifted children face unchallenging schoolwork and can achieve at perfect (or near-perfect) scores with relatively little effort. Their achievement expectations often become reinforced by teachers, parents, and even peer groups—and puts them at particular risk for perfectionistic behaviors.

Perfectionism manifests in children in several ways, and there are strategies for adults to help their children.

HEALTHY & UNHEALTHY PERFECTIONISM

Although children's perfectionistic behaviors can be a frustrating and overwhelming experience for parents and teachers, it's important to understand that they can have positive benefits for students. Perfectionism, as a set of behaviors, can be classified as healthy and unhealthy.

Unhealthy. Unhealthy perfectionism can be associated with stress, unyielding expectations, risk avoidance, and procrastination, which can ultimately lead to depression and anxiety disorders, greater levels of violence and substance abuse, and eating disorders. When serious concerns about a child's mental health arise, it's imperative to seek help from a mental health professional.

Healthy. Healthy perfectionism is associated with achievement and dedication to academic performance. Students who exhibit healthy perfectionism have high expectations for their work, motivation to complete tasks, and self-confidence in their abilities to reach goals. Therefore, interventions aim to help children transition from unhealthy to healthy behavior.

PROFILES & STRATEGIES

Children manifest their perfectionism in various ways, including overachievement, procrastination or risk-avoidance. Many gifted children fit multiple categories and may vary by area (e.g., homework, extracurricular activities, school projects).

Academic Achiever. Characterized by high expectations for academic performance, with a strong focus on external evaluations, such as grades. Often emotionally upset with grades that are less than the highest performance levels.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

» Although unhealthy perfectionism is a common concern about gifted children, parents and teachers can use strategies to help change to healthier orientations.

» Children exhibiting unhealthy perfectionistic behaviors can fit several profiles that each present unique challenges but ultimately can be overcome.

» Unhealthy perfectionism often manifests as procrastination when perfection on tasks becomes too overwhelming.

» Declining participation in fun activities may be a way that unhealthy perfectionists avoid disappointment in failing to live up to unreasonably high expectations.

Perfectionism

Academic Achiever (con't). May equate 89% on a spelling test with "failing," or generalize poor performance on one assignment or in one class to his overall level of intelligence or self-worth: "I got a B on my math homework; I must not be very smart."

Parents can de-emphasize grades and external evaluations, focusing instead on growth and the satisfaction from completing work—before work is evaluated and grades are returned.

Aggravated Accuracy Assessor. Focuses on mistakes and often spends inordinate amounts of time attempting to create "perfect" work. She often spends time on homework to the detriment of other activities, such as socializing with friends and family, extracurricular activities, and sleep. *Parents can help by modelling mistakes, providing examples of imperfection in role models from books and movies, and adhering to schedules that limit time spent on assignments.*

Risk Evader. Often chooses to disengage when faced with the possibility of not being successful or the best. A high school student might choose to avoid Advanced Placement classes, afraid he might not be able to achieve high grades in more challenging classes. A younger student may avoid answering questions in class or completing assignments. *Parents and teachers can create safe environments for these children to take academic risks and praise attempts, rather than the outcomes, of these endeavors.*

Controlling Image Manager. Focuses on the perceptions of others and attempts to preserve the appearance of perfection or high levels of success. This can create conflicts with peers when students quit playing or "throw" games when it appears that they may lose. *Parents and teachers can role play good sportsmanship and help children develop pride in the process and effort rather than the final outcome.*

Procrastinating Perfectionist. Often delays initiating work, faced with looming expectations and fear. Children may see this as a way to avoid risk or preserve their image. (If they wait until the last minute and then rush, they have an excuse for lesser quality.) Other children may procrastinate due to anxiety, paralyzed by fear that their performance will not live up to their expectations. *Parents and teachers can help create timelines for the completion of work and work with children to divide large tasks into manageable sub-goals.*



FOR MORE INFO

Adelson, J. L. (2007). A "perfect" case study: Perfectionism in academically talented fourth graders. *Gifted Child Today*, 30, 14–20.

Adelson, J. L., & Wilson, H. E. (2009). *Letting go of perfect: Overcoming perfectionism in kids*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Greenspon, T. S. (2007). *What to do when good enough isn't good enough: The real deal on perfectionism: A guide for kids*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Van Gemert, L. (2017). *Perfectionism: A practical guide to managing "never good enough."* Tucson, AZ: Great Potential Press.



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