Talented and Gifted

**Checklist of Characteristics of Underachievers**

When you have an identified TAG student who is underachieving, it’s important to recognize the characteristics and find strategies to support the student as a learner.

The most common characteristics and patterns of underachievement include:

- A very high IQ
- Poor work habits
- A seeming inability to concentrate
- Lack of effort in tasks
- An intense interest in one particular area
- Frequently unfinished work
- A low self esteem
- Demonstrations of emotional frustration
- Negative attitudes towards self and peers
- A skill deficit in at least one subject area
- Inattentiveness to task at hand
- Failure to respond to motivation by usual teacher techniques

Because of continual failures in some areas, underachieving gifted students tend to exhibit either of two basic behavior patterns: **aggressive** or **withdrawn**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggressive behavior pattern</th>
<th>Withdrawal behavior pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Stubborn refusal to comply with requests</td>
<td>• Lack of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attention seeking</td>
<td>• Fantasy world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disruption of others</td>
<td>• Working alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continual rejection of set work</td>
<td>• Little in-class work undertaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Absence of self-direction in decision making</td>
<td>• Little attempt made to justify behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continual alienation of peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Factors Influencing Underachievement**

It is important to determine the causes of underachievement in order to alleviate the problem. Some are listed here:

- Medical
- Physical
- Perfectionism
- A desire to fit in
- Emotional status (grief, separation)
- Low self esteem
- Pressure to conform
- Perceptions of peers towards the individual
- Expectations (of self and others)
- A feeling of powerlessness
- Lack of autonomy

**Some Useful Strategies**

1. **Developing control of learning**
   - ✔ Realistic goal setting
   - ✔ Appropriate classroom environments

2. **Providing an opportunity to perform**
   - ✔ By increased stimulation and complexity
   - ✔ By meta-cognitive training

3. **Encouraging positive relationships**
   - ✔ Faster risk taking
   - ✔ Co-operation and collaboration is encouraged