



What the Research Says About Gifted Students’ Resilience

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Resilience refers to the ability to respond positively to present or past difficulties (Wright & Matsen, 2005). Resiliency theory highlights “what actually works in students’ lives, instead of focusing on what has not worked” (Barnard-Brak, Burley, Marbley, & Deason, 2010, p. 47). Three major influences that affect resilience are risk factors, protective factors, and resilient assets (Gonzales, 2003). Risk factors include negative circumstances or chronic hardships such as neglect, low income, teenage pregnancy, family breakup, and participation in violent activities (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010). Protective factors that mitigate, or potentially outweigh, the impact of risk factors include support from teachers, mentors, family, peers, and communities. Resilient assets, or developmental assets, are attributes that individuals use to adapt and include problem-solving skills, sense of purpose, social competence, or participation in a program or mentorship. An increased emphasis on strengths, rather than on deficits, is at the heart of resiliency theory.

To identify resiliency in gifted populations, this review included articles published since 2004 in *Gifted Child Today*, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *Journal of Advanced Academics*, and *Roeper Review*. Selected articles either examined or discussed gifted students’ resilience or their ability to overcome obstacles. Research pertaining to college students, parenting, or students residing outside of the United States was excluded. Using these criteria, 17 articles were found. The type of article varied and included literature reviews, descriptions, qualitative case studies, longitudinal research, and quantitative studies. With the exception of one study that examined sixth-grade students (Stutler, 2011), the remainder of the empirical studies focused on secondary students.

Researchers identified risk factors that might influence gifted students’ resiliency such as psychosocial issues and peer relationships (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010; Peterson, Duncan, & Canady, 2009), bullying (Peterson & Ray,

2006), pervasive and mixed-maladaptive perfectionism (Dixon, Lapsley, & Hanchon, 2004), overcommitment (Peterson et al., 2009), socioeconomic standing (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010), academics (Peterson et al., 2009), school transitions (Peterson et al., 2009), and structural issues within the school (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010). Neihart (2006) explained that at those times when an individual's achievement goals are inconsistent with one's gender, social, or ethnic culture, an achievement/affiliation conflict can exist that undermines academic success, risk taking, and future goals. Gifted females, gifted minorities, and gifted disadvantaged students are at greatest risk for this type of conflict. Risk factors specific to the lives of twice-exceptional students are unrealistic parent or teacher expectations, exposure to nonstimulating environments at school, and difficulties forming friendships (Gardynik & McDonald, 2005). All of these studies show that gifted students are not immune to negative life events or adversity and that adults may underestimate causes and amount of gifted students' anxiety and stress.

Along with risk factors, protective factors that promoted resiliency among gifted students were recognized. These factors included academic achievement, internal locus of control, risk-taking, high self-efficacy, a sense of self-understanding (Gardynik & McDonald, 2005), and high intelligence (Kitano & Lewis, 2005). Researchers also identified a supportive environment with caring teachers and strong family and community relationships as important mitigating the impact of risk factors (Garrett, Antrop-Gonzalez, & Velez, 2010; Mueller, 2009). Protective factors against depressive symptoms for both gifted and nongifted students were a strong self-concept, high family cohesion, and school belonging (Mueller, 2009). Studies that focused on gifted minority students identified

additional factors for these special groups. Establishing a scholar identity among African American males influences their level of achievement (Whiting, 2006). Additional factors identified from a national survey of Black students included attending suburban or rural schools and positive teacher opinions (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010).

For Puerto Rican gifted males, church attendance, extracurricular involvement, a strong ethnic identity, and encouragement of mothers and/or sisters were among protective factors that promoted resilience (Garrett et al., 2010).

Developmental or resilient assets that gifted students used to adapt included personal characteristics such as work ethic (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010), strong coping skills (Dixon et al., 2004), flexibility, and high motivation (Gardynik & McDonald, 2005). Interaction with fictional literature also appeared to assist sixth-grade girls in dealing with adversity, allowing them a vicarious experience to help in the self-actualization process (Stutler, 2011). In response to bullying, middle school students used calming techniques and social strategies (Peterson & Ray, 2006). For special groups, Hall (2007) reported that urban Black and Latino adolescent males used supportive peers, church relationships, and mentors to aid in coping with stress in their environment. Other developmental assets identified by academically resilient, low-income Black students included the willingness to embrace potential, the identification with their culture, a future orientation, high self-confidence, and an internal locus of control (Morales, 2010).

Researchers described special schools and programs that offered promise for developing resilience. While attending a private college preparatory school for twice-exceptional learners, participants demonstrated positive cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social growth (Baum,

Schader, & Hébert, 2014). Researchers suggested that positive relationships, the passage of time, psychological safety, tolerance of uneven development, and participation in a talent-focused, strengths-based program were five factors that promoted growth and cultivated resilience in these twice-exceptional students. In an International Baccalaureate high school, Shaunessy and Suldo (2010) found that gifted and high-achieving groups of students reported similar stress levels but gifted students were more likely to use anger, humor, and problem solving to cope with pressures. Both groups employed positive reframing, time management, task avoidance, and social support. In a residential high school academy for intellectually gifted learners, the students learned social coping strategies, which resulted in a greater sense of peer acceptance and a slight decrease in their personal perception of their own giftedness (Cross & Swiatek, 2009). Finally, in a math and science academy for students from urban backgrounds, researchers recommended that educators create (a) opportunities for gifted students to explore interests within a psychologically safe environment, (b) a curriculum that promotes ongoing inquiry-based problem-centered opportunities, and (c) a way of honoring cultural heritage (Marshall, McGee, McLaren, & Veal, 2011).

This literature review suggests that teachers should work to identify, value, and cultivate students' gifts and talents within a supportive environment. Promoting positive relationships with families, schools, and communities can create protective factors that develop resiliency. Honoring each student's culture and providing opportunities for discussion that develop skills that address potential achievement versus affiliation conflicts may be especially beneficial for gifted students from low-income backgrounds, gifted minorities, and/or gifted females.

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ANNOTATED REFERENCES

- Barnard-Brak, L., Burley, H., Marbely, A. F., & Deason, C. (2010). African American millennials: "A profile of promise." *Gifted Child Today*, 33(2), 47–54.

Data from the Educational Longitudinal Study: 2002 (ELS: 2002) were used to create a descriptive profile of African American millennials who might benefit from gifted education. ELS: 2002 was a national survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and was comprised of responses from 15,362 tenth graders. Using Resiliency Theory and Renzulli's three-ring model of giftedness as theoretical frameworks, the authors identified variables that demonstrated high academic ability, creativity, and task commitment. Using the established criteria, the authors identified 27% of the African American respondents as having potential to benefit from gifted programming. When only variables contributing to academic ability were considered, 11% of the African American population fit the profile. The authors identified risk factors, protective factors, and developmental assets present in these populations. Risk factors included structural issues within the school, psychosocial issues faced by the student, and socioeconomic standing, specifically students from poverty. School location (urban

or suburban) and teacher opinion of students were identified as protective factors whereas work ethic proved to be the only markedly different developmental factor identified in the analysis. The authors suggest that resilience, as demonstrated by positive adaptation in the face of adversity, is a combination of socioeconomic standing, teachers and schools, and developmental assets; the most malleable of these is the beliefs and expectations of teachers and schools. Implications of these findings include the need for additional teacher training to help identify and capitalize on potential gifts, the inclusion of a multicultural gifted curriculum, and the grooming of students with potential by focusing on student strengths regardless of formal identification.

- Baum, S. M., Schader, R. M., & Hébert, T. P. (2014). Through a different lens: Reflecting on a strengths-based, talent-focused approach for twice-exceptional learners. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 58, 311–327.

Resilience of twice-exceptional gifted learners was explored in this case study conducted with the first cohort of students in grades 8–12 who were enrolled in a private college preparatory school for twice-exceptional students. The school was established using strength-based and talent-focused approaches influenced by the positive psychology and talent development movements. The Multiperspective Process Model and the Schoolwide Enrichment Model served as structures for the development of school curriculum and programming. These models focus on holistic teaching practices and take into consideration student family context, learning differences, social and emotional readiness, and disabilities, as well as gifts, talents, and interests. Participants included in the case study were all members of the first cohort of students who entered

the program in middle school and went on to meet graduation requirements. Ten students, eight males and two females, met these criteria. All students were identified as gifted and had been diagnosed with a second exceptionality such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiance disorder (ODD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and Asperger's syndrome. Data in the form of retrospective, semistructured video and audio interviews (involving students, teachers, and parents), focus groups with students and parents, and information from students' permanent folders were included. Researchers identified four areas of growth experienced by the students. Growth, in the form of positive change, was seen in each student; some students' growth was consistent throughout their years at the school; others were erratic or sporadic. All students showed cognitive growth as demonstrated by increases in productivity and flexibility. Students demonstrated emotional and behavioral growth by consciously deciding to get along with others. As a result, students became a highly supportive tight-knit community where confidence increased. Researchers identified five factors that contributed to this growth: a psychologically safe environment, positive relationships, time, tolerance of asynchrony, and a strengths-based talent-focused philosophy. The authors concluded that effective programming for supporting resilience in twice-exceptional students should include collecting data for a specific purpose, addressing student deficits contextually within the curriculum for higher authenticity, and assessing progress over time.

- Cross, T. L., & Swiatek, M. A. (2009). Social coping among academically gifted adolescents in a residential setting: A longitudinal study. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 53, 25–33. doi:10.1177/0016986208326554

Researchers investigated social coping

changes as reported by gifted students who attended a 2-year residential academy on a mid-sized university campus in the Midwest. At the beginning of their junior year and near the end of their senior year 300 students took a 34-item Social Coping Questionnaire. Three small, but statistically significant, changes in social coping occurred. After academy attendance, students were slightly more likely to deny their giftedness, which suggests that students become more humble when surrounded by other high-ability peers. Second, students reported decreased social interaction as measured by the likelihood of engaging in extracurricular activities, providing academic help to peers, or using extracurricular activities to cultivate friends. Given the residential university setting with gifted peers, the researchers point out this finding was not surprising. Higher peer acceptance was the third finding, suggesting that students felt more accepted by academy students than previous high school peers. Although the average reported changes were all less than one point on a 7-point scale, it suggested that attendance at a residential academy might prompt self-examination, adjust students' use of extracurricular activities for social interaction, and increase students' feelings of peer acceptance.

Dixon, F. A., Lapsley, D. K., & Hanchon, T. A. (2004). An empirical typology of perfectionism in gifted adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 48, 95–106. doi:10.1177/001698620404800203

Gifted residential academy students in their junior year ($N = 140$) completed multiple assessments that measured perfectionism, psychological symptomatology, positive adjustment, and coping. Subsequently, researchers documented a perfectionism classification (or typology) for gifted students and the corresponding mental health implications of each cate-

gory. The four classifications were: Non-perfectionist, Mixed-Adaptive, Pervasive, and Mixed-Maladaptive. Non-perfectionists ($n = 39$) have confidence in their abilities; they do not set very high standards and are not bothered by their personal mistakes. Mixed-Adaptive ($n = 51$) individuals set high standards, use organizational skills, and express confidence in their abilities, but also do not typically respond negatively to personal errors. Although Non-perfectionists feel less academically competent than the former, both Non-perfectionists and Mixed-Adaptive students are well adjusted, reporting few psychiatric symptoms and strong coping skills. Pervasive ($n = 30$) students set high standards, question their ability and tend to overreact to personal mistakes. Mixed-Maladaptive ($n = 20$) students doubt their abilities and set lower standards, yet they are overly disturbed about their mistakes. Students in either of the Pervasive or Mixed-Adaptive categories generally have comparatively poorer mental health. They use dysfunctional coping, have a poor self-image, and report greater psychiatric symptoms such as depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive propensities, and more physical complaints. This research showed that perfectionistic tendencies are not always associated with decreased coping skills or maladjustment, rather it is the presence of maladaptive tendencies, such as insecurity combined with overreacting to faults, that decreases resiliency. Parents, educators, and counselors are exhorted to attempt to assist gifted students' in diminishing their maladaptive tendencies.

Gardynik, U. M., & McDonald, L. (2005). Implications of risk and resilience in the life of the individual who is gifted/learning disabled. *Roeper Review*, 27, 206–214. doi:10.1080/02783190509554320

In this article, the authors begin by sharing research findings regarding

risk and resiliency and highlight the different findings related to biological, psychological, cognitive, and environmental factors that serve to buffer the individual's behavior and reaction to adversity. Next, a discussion on the identification, research on risk factors, and findings on protective factors are shared in regards to individuals with learning disabilities, gifted individuals, and individuals who are gifted and learning disabled. Individuals with learning disabilities can have increased vulnerability to academic difficulties and failure. Individuals who are gifted may experience asynchrony, face unrealistic expectation from parents and teachers, be exposed to a nonstimulating environment at school, or experience difficulties developing friendship. An individual who is gifted with learning disabilities has shown to have low self-esteem and frustration due to this paradoxical combination of gifted and disabilities and different protective factors. Resilient individuals with learning disabilities are usually more proactive, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and have realistic educational and vocational plans. Studies have shown that gifted individuals have characteristics that are found among resilient individuals. These factors include risk-taking, high self-concept, good self-efficacy, academic achievement, internal locus of control, and self-understanding. However, research related to individuals who are gifted with learning disabilities is scarce. These studies show the importance of positive supporting surroundings, strong drive to develop talents and abilities, and adaptability to change and transitions. The authors conclude the article by giving recommendations to schools and teachers: early identification is crucial; teachers should focus on recognizing and valuing individual gifts and talents; students should be exposed to coping strategies that develop resiliency, critical thinking,

formal logic, problem solving, and self-understanding; the curriculum should include high-quality literature; and teacher training needs to be multifaceted (i.e., focus on education, psychology, child development, and counseling).

Garrett, T., Antrop-Gonzalez, R., & Velez, W. (2010). Examining the success factors of high-achieving Puerto Rican male high-school students. *Roeper Review*, 32, 106–115. doi:10.1080/02783191003587892

The literature has been overemphasizing the underachieving Latino/Puerto Rican students, and for that reason the researchers were interested in identifying factors influencing high academic achievement in Puerto Rican male

high school students enrolled in an urban school. Purposeful selection of participants included the following criteria: (a) male high school, (b) from grade 11 or 12, (c) having a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher, (d) enrolled in at least one AP course, and (e) have not dropped out of school previously. Three students met those conditions. Three semistructured interviews were conducted to (a) elicit students' descriptions regarding their family background and previous schooling experiences, (b) focus on each student's current school experiences, and (c) have each student compare and contrast their previous and current school and home experiences, as well as discuss future life aspirations. By looking at recurring meaning units and identifying common

themes, four factors were identified as influences for success in academic achievement. First, church and extra-curricular involvement served as protective measures by developing their self-concepts, discouraging the students from participating in oppositional youth groups, and contributing to activities that provided them with high degrees of social capital. Second, their strong Puerto Rican identity had positive impact on their academic achievement by being a tool for dispelling the negative stereotypical image. Third, three distinct roles of their mothers and/or sisters were found to be positive influences on the students' success. The mothers helped their sons with schoolwork, served as friend or mentor when needed, and pushed their son to get good grades.



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Fourth, the participants explained how caring teachers had some impact on their high academic achievement. Caring teachers wanted to know their students on a personal basis, could be trusted so that students felt comfortable talking about their personal problems and seeking advice, and held them to high academic expectations. According to these findings, the authors offered some suggestion for teachers, school policy makers, and scholars. Latino children should be encouraged to participate in school-sponsored and community-based extracurricular activities. Students' racial and ethnic identity should be nurtured, respected, and viewed as assets rather than problems. Also, teachers should get to know their students and the role of their family members. Schools of education should include courses that train teachers to be culturally sensitive and have high expectations for all students regardless of their background.

Hall, H. R. (2007). Poetic expressions: Students of color express resiliency through metaphors and similes. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 18, 216–244. doi:10.4219/jaa-2007-355

This qualitative study used performance-based products to study the nature of resilience among young men of color. The author used adolescents' written expression in the form of poetry, narrative, and hip-hop rhymes to better understand coping strategies and resources used. Participants in this study were three adolescent males of color who attended an all-boys after-school program designed for at-risk students. Data were collected in the form of creative writing samples, observations, and unstructured interviews with the participants. The use of creative written expression provided an opportunity to develop awareness about the strategies and resources assisting adolescents who face negative psychological situations. Analysis

of the data collected showed that students use both familial and nonfamilial resources to support and aid them in coping with stressful situations.

Kitano, M. K., & Lewis, R. B. (2005). Resilience and coping: Implications for gifted children and youth at risk. *Roeper Review*, 27, 200–205. doi:10.1080/02783190509554319

This article summarized the findings from the resiliency literature related to the development of children's and adolescents' resiliency. The authors discuss implications and recommendation for teachers, counselors, and schools in terms of curriculum development, strategies and activities to help students develop factors to help them overcome adversity. Studies on resiliency show that even though high intelligence is correlated with resilient outcomes, it is not a requirement. In fact, cognitive ability appears to be a supporting factor, especially in terms of problem solving and coping. The development of resiliency involves personal characteristics, coping strategies, and environmental factors. The authors highlighted the key role of diversity in the development of resiliency and suggest that culture is a major influence on how individuals perceive and cope with stress. The authors suggest that gifted students should be exposed to curricula, strategies, and activities that will enhance their psychological and educational resilience. Students should develop cognitive and social problem-solving techniques, coping skills, educational aspirations, and self-efficacy. The development of resiliency in school should be a comprehensive effort that includes: (a) enhancing connectivity; (b) encouraging a sense of self-efficacy and agency; (c) encouraging optimism; (d) teaching diversity and indirectly a range of culturally consonant coping strategies and coach implementation; (e) validating children's experiences

with bias; and (f) supporting pride in heritage.

Marshall, S. P., McGee, G. W., McLaren, E., & Veal, C. C. (2011). Discovering and developing diverse STEM talent: Enabling academically talented urban youth to flourish. *Gifted Child Today*, 34(1), 16–23.

With a global rise in commitment to improving science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) opportunities for students, many programs have been established to close the excellence gap that exists in the United States. Disproportional levels of performance and achievement in national and state assessments has led to the development of programs such as the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA). IMSA's learning culture and environment is designed to enable students from urban backgrounds to (a) shift the locus of control for learning from others to themselves; (b) become more autonomous, creative, and metacognitive learners; (c) take responsibility for shaping their own thinking; (d) redefine their learning identity from passive to active; (e) develop intellectual discipline, emotional resilience, and confidence; (f) discover their talents, embrace what they love, and become comfortable with who they are; (g) explore the human consequences of innovation and research; and (h) develop an expansive and multidimensional worldview. Case studies of three different IMSA participants were presented to describe and explore the work of the program. Individuals included a current student participant as well as two alumni who had become a successful physician and a businesswoman. Analysis of the case studies found that effective talent development in urban youth involves (a) early immersion in multiple inquiry-based and problem-centered enrichment opportunities, (b) a network of significant caring and trusting relationships

that help students develop academic confidence and a strong resilient learning identity, (d) multiple opportunities for students to safely explore a wide range of interests and passions, and (e) programs and services that honor students' cultural heritage.

Morales, E. E. (2010). Linking strengths: Identifying and exploring protective factor clusters in academically resilient low-socioeconomic urban students of color. *Roeper Review*, 32, 164–175. doi:10.1080/02783193.2010.485302

This qualitative study aimed at identifying specific protective factors, clusters of shared factors, and how these factors influenced academic success of academically successful at-risk students. Fifty academically resilient low-socioeconomic Black students, including 31 females, 19 males, and 12 identified as gifted, participated in this 8-year study. To take part in the study, the participant had parents who were high school graduates or below and worked in semiskilled jobs and identified themselves as part of an ethnic minority group. In addition, the participants should have completed at least 30 college credits and have a minimum grade point average of 3.0. The researcher used three structured interviews to collect data on background information and the student's resilience processes. The analysis of the data was done with the aim of identifying noteworthy protective factors. The results identified two distinct clusters of protective factors that worked in an interrelated and supplemental fashion for a majority of the participants (65%). The first cluster consisted of five distinct factors and was named by the researcher as "It's okay to be smart": Skillful mentoring for future success. These factors were: (a) willingness/desire to "class jump" (move up in social class), (b) caring school personnel, (c) sense of obligation to one's race/ethnicity, and (d) strong future orientation. The second cluster

was named Pride, debt, effort and success: Becoming someone. This cluster included the following factors: (a) strong work ethic, (b) persistence, (c) high self-esteem, (d) internal locus of control, (e) attendance at out-of-zone school, (f) high parental expectations supported by words and actions, and (g) mother modeling strong work ethics. The analysis also showed that being identified as gifted contributed to students' attendance at more prestigious institutions compared to their peers, as well as being more likely to be on an earlier trajectory toward high-academic achievement. Because resiliency factors have not been studied intensely, the author recommended more research to provide appropriate assistance to at-risk students. Knowing more about which protective factors work well, and specific combinations, will help in determining the types of services needed.

Mueller, C. E. (2009). Protective factors as barriers to depression in gifted and nongifted adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 53, 3–14. doi:10.1177/0016986208326552

Drawing from the 1995 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Survey, 752 gifted students who scored in the top 5% of the Add Health Picture Vocabulary Test (AHPVT) were matched with respect to age, sex, family income, and race to 752 students who scored in the nongifted range on the AHPVT. According to survey data, gifted students reported, on average, significantly less depressive symptoms than their nongifted peers. Vulnerability to depression decreased for gifted and nongifted students who affirmed a strong self-concept, high parent-family interconnection, and a sense of belonging at school. Gifted Hispanics adolescents, however, were significantly more depressed compared to Whites, even if they had the three protective factors described. The author emphasized that home and school social rela-

tionships can mitigate depression and boost resiliency; therefore, attention should be given to strengthening the "family-school-community" connection. Future research is suggested on identifying additional psychosocial adjustment factors and investigating which and how social supports mitigate, prevent and promote resiliency after depression, especially for Hispanics.

Neihart, M. (2006). Achievement/affiliation conflicts in gifted adolescents. *Roeper Review*, 28, 196–202. doi:10.1080/02783190609554364

Achievement/affiliation conflicts arise when there are contradictory expectations such as the mainstream culture not valuing an individual's achievement goals. For example, taking advanced classes, participating in academic extracurricular activities, working hard to get on the honor roll, or doing homework might not be an expectation or valued by the culture. Hence students might reject such behavior in order to have a sense of belonging to their culture. The rejections of such opportunities are more common among gifted females, gifted minorities, and gifted disadvantaged students. Although no studies have yet examined the effectiveness of interventions with high-ability students in regards to solving achievement or affiliation conflicts, the author summarized the findings on coping strategies and interventions supporting high aspirations and high achievement in spite of pressures to withdraw. A recommended practice encouraged teachers to give students opportunities to engage in open discourse about class, identity and achievement. Teachers should help students become adept at code switching—changing behavior to accommodate the expectation of a specific environment. Learning these skills might be accomplished through conversations and interviews with successful adults who negotiate different cultures on a daily basis. In

addition, students should be exposed to curricula that emphasize a strong sense of self, culture, and social contexts. Students should learn to know themselves, identify the values of their experiences, and clearly define goals. Teachers can provide students with movies and literature focusing on youths resolving achievement conflicts so that students can identify with role-model characters. The author also recommended creating a welcoming learning environment that (a) addresses identification and learning goals concurrently, (b) normalizes the conflicts in students' experiences, (c) includes cultural brokers, and (d) provides direct instruction in social skills for leadership.

Peterson, J., Duncan, N., & Canady, K. (2009). A longitudinal study of negative life events, stress, and school experiences of gifted youth.

Gifted Child Quarterly, 53, 34–49.
doi:10.1177/0016986208326553

Researchers investigated the negative life events gifted students experience during school years, their impact on achievement, and students' retrospective perspective of stressors, achievements, and obstacles. From elementary school to high school graduation, participating parents annually completed a checklist that recorded the negative life experiences their gifted child faced. The negative life events parents most often reported included death or serious illness in immediate or extended family, student illness, student injury, death of student's friend, car accident, and divorce/remarriage. After graduation, students completed a reflective evaluation consisting of open-ended questions regarding their accomplishments, challenges, stress levels, and advice for parents and teachers. Academics, school transitions, college applications/decisions, peer relationships, and overcommitment were most

often cited stressful events in order of frequency. Less frequently cited were death, family troubles, illness or injury, eating disorders, substance abuse, and thoughts of suicide, abuse, and family member incarceration. Interestingly, agreement between parent checklists and student reports of stressful events was only 36%. For example, death was the stressful event most reported by parents, yet only 21% of students recounted it as a major challenge. In three examples, parents and students had opposite perceptions of the same event. Students reported their stress level increased with age, peaking at an average of 6.8 in high school (on a scale from 1 to 10). Students demonstrated academic success in the midst of troubling life events; more than half graduated with over a 4.0 GPA and only 3% earned less than a 3.0 GPA. Approximately half of the original sample continued through high school graduation. The group of participants was essentially homogeneous; only

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Founded in 1987, The Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science, TAMS, located on the University of North Texas campus is a program designed for high school age students to live on the university campus while taking a full load of university classes. Over the years TAMS students and graduates of the program have received recognition at the state, regional and national level in student research and leadership.



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one student was not White and the motivated students were from middle to upper SES households. Academic stress was mentioned with AP tests, projects, acceleration, completion, and difficult classes. Students expressed the most passion about peer challenges such as bullying, depression, trying to fit in, ongoing friendship struggles, and a sense of isolation. Discrepancies in parent and student reports suggest that adults may underestimate the amount of stress gifted students face from ongoing academic pressures, school transitions, over commitment and peer relationships.

Peterson, J. S., & Ray, K. E. (2006). Bullying among the gifted: The subjective experience. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50, 252–269. doi:10.1177/001698620605000305

Even one bullying incident can be distressing. Structured interviews explored the personal experience of 57 eighth-grade students (74% male) who reported being bullied on a national survey. Bullying occurred in grades K to 8, peaking in grade 6 with males as the more likely targets. Five overarching themes emerged from the interviews. First, gifted students are more vulnerable to bullying. Second, participants silently suffered while they hypothesized on the external factors that contributed to bullying incidents and assumed responsibility for independently figuring out how to halt bullying. Third, bullying did not have to involve a physical component to inflict damage. Tactics such as name-calling, vulgar language, or insulting the participant's family made students feel frightened and question their worth, which in turn led to long-term negative effects and violent thoughts. Fourth, strategies for coping improved as students matured. Most strategies included internal actions such as "building a wall," getting used to it, using calming techniques, or venting frustrations through athletics. Students also reported social strategies

such as making new groups of friends (e.g., opposite sex groups or underclassmen), laughing at the teasing, refraining from answering questions in class, and/or self-protection until a teacher walked by. Some students sought help from their institution such as recording the bully's remarks for gaining school administrator support, talking to a school counselor, or applying techniques learned in peer mediation programs. Physical changes such as a growth spurt, weight loss, class schedule changes, or relocation to another school also decreased or eliminated bullying. Gifted students, however, were not only targets of bullying but could be perpetrators as well. Gifted bullies who changed their behavior was the final theme. Educators and parents are cautioned that students' tendency to stay silent minimizes the true extent of bullying and that bullying should not be trivialized. Because being known decreases vulnerability, the researchers argued that educators should help gifted students make peer connections and provide anti-bullying and affective curriculum for all children.

Shaunessy, E., & Suldo, S. M. (2010). Strategies used by intellectually gifted students to cope with stress during their participation in a high school International Baccalaureate program. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 54, 127–137. doi:10.1177/0016986209355977

At an International Baccalaureate (IB) high school in the Southeast, researchers used archived data to examine (a) if intellectually gifted students perceived the same levels of stress as their high-achieving counterparts, and (b) if coping behaviors were similar across the two groups. Mean scores on the Perceived Stress Scale demonstrated that the gifted ($n = 52$) and the high-achieving ($n = 89$) students experienced similar amounts of stress (within the "moderate" range). Compared to the authors'

previous research, however, a typical gifted or high-achieving student in the academically rigorous IB program had significantly greater stress levels than a typical general education student. Eight focus groups that included students from the original sample ($n = 22$ gifted and $n = 26$ high achieving) explored students' coping actions. According to measures on the Adolescent Coping Questionnaire for Problem Experiences, both gifted and nongifted students used similar deliberate coping strategies such as positive reframing, avoiding unpleasant tasks, and family communication. Other strategies used by both groups of students included time and task management and seeking social support. As opposed to high achievers, gifted students were twice as likely to procrastinate or avoid demands by engaging in other activities such as sports, video games, or watching TV. The method of problem solving for gifted students was different than the high achievers; rather than explicating thinking through problems and solutions, the gifted participants appeared to choose intuitively to buckle down to get work done. Other stress reduction techniques for gifted students were to reduce actively their course workload, decrease their personal expectations, or negotiate with teachers to reduce assignments or change deadlines. Gifted participants relied on humor and anger in responding to stress more than their peers. The authors urged educators to be cognizant that gifted and high-ability peers may prefer different coping mechanisms for dealing with stress.

Stutler, S. L. (2011). Gifted girls' passion for fiction: The quest for meaning, growth, and self-actualization. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 55, 18–38. doi:10.1177/0016986210383979

Reading fiction assisted preadolescent girls make meaning of their life. This ethnographic case study

investigated the meanings constructed by eight verbally gifted girls through reading fictional literature. Twice weekly the girls met during recess for student-led “book chats.” Data were gathered from book discussions, parent interviews, participants’ reading journals, and researchers’ field notes. Intellectual intensity characterized the manner in which issues were explored through reading. They used books to connect to their personal lives and to consider deep issues such as the meaning of life, freedom, death, and justice. Imaginational intensities cultivated through reading fiction helped the girls visualize themselves as characters in the books and to experience vicariously the character’s physical sensations in different settings. In addition, self-actualization occurred as these girls reflected upon what they read. Disequilibrium ensued from the observed disconnect between reality and the way things should be, but reading offered a way to cope with adversity. In spite of difficulties, their advanced reading abilities and their choice of reading material aided their resiliency and helped them to construct their lives’ purposes. The author concluded that educators often underappreciate or misunderstand the intensity that verbally gifted readers approach literature. Gifted children eagerly desire stimulating reading that provides meaningful interaction and “it is vital that educators perceive the important place that fiction has in the lives of verbally gifted preadolescent learners” (p. 37).

Whiting, G. W. (2006). From at risk to at promise: Developing scholar identities among Black males. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 17, 222–229. doi:10.4219/jsg-2006-407

Establishing scholar identities among African American males is needed because of their underrepresentation in the referral, screening, and placement process in gifted and talented

education as well as their overrepresentation in school failure and disengagement statistics. The author suggested that if African American males see themselves in a more positive light as students in the school setting that they will reach a higher level of achievement, which will potentially lead to higher identification for gifted and talented services. The author identified nine characteristics that contribute to a positive scholar identity. These characteristics include self-efficacy, being willing to make sacrifices, having an internal locus of control, being future oriented, self-awareness, need for achievement, academic self-confidence, a strong racial identity, and affirmation of masculinity. The author suggested that creating a resilient scholar identity in African American males can be promoted through the use of community mentors and role models, multicultural counseling, academically oriented school events, multicultural education, and community outreach and service opportunities. The model proposed seeks to increase African American males’ sense of belonging to the school system as well as developing a higher value of education.

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