

NEWS FROM ACADEMICALLY GIFTED

The Middle School Edition

Quarter 4

💡 *Parent Tips: Supporting AG Students in the Final Stretch*

Even gifted students can lose steam near the end of the year. Here are a few quick ways to help keep them motivated:

- **Celebrate Effort** – Praise persistence and problem-solving, not just grades.
- **Set Small Goals** – Break tasks into manageable steps and recognize progress.
- **Prioritize Together** – Help them focus on what matters most and let go of perfection.
- **Normalize Burnout** – Let them know it's okay to feel tired—encourage finishing strong, not flawlessly.
 - **Fuel Curiosity** – Offer time for creative outlets or passion projects outside of school.
 - **Ask Their “Why”** – Help them connect learning to personal goals and pride.

You've got this—and so do they!

Staying motivated through the end of the year is important—but so is keeping those curious minds engaged over the summer! 🌞 Check out these enrichment opportunities that can help your child explore new interests, stay challenged, and have fun during the break.

- For select rising 9th grade students, the AG Department sponsors the Academic All-Star Camp. Notifications to students selected to participate were sent home in late March. 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
- Ferrum College Summer Enrichment Camps
- GCS Academic All-Star Camp (Select Rising 9th Graders)
- GCS AP Boot Camp (For students enrolling in AP Courses for the first time)
- 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

Link:

<https://tinyurl.com/SummerEnrich2025>

QR Code:



Update Regarding VS Eligibility:

The Very Strong (VS) Program is housed exclusively at The Academy at Lincoln. In this program, eligible students receive instruction that addresses the need for acceleration, extension, and enrichment for highly gifted students. To qualify for the VS Program, students must meet the following criteria:

- Math, Reading, and composite Aptitude performance at the 97thile or higher. For Math and Reading, the student must also have scored a Level 5 on the 2025 EOG.
- For Math, the student must be able to follow the math sequence used in the VS Program.
 - A current 6th grader must be enrolled in a course that leads to NC Math 1 placement.
 - A current 7th grader must be enrolled in NC Math 1.
- Science and Social Studies performance at the 95thile or higher.
- An “A” average in all core-subject areas.

If you would like to submit a late request to determine your child's eligibility for the VS Program, please use this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/pMQpus3ZRS> (link opens on May 13, 2025)

Perfectionism: How to Help Your Child Avoid the Pitfalls

ISSUE #04
April 2025

How Does Perfectionism Start in Children?

Perfectionism can be defined as setting very high, even impossible, standards for oneself. When those standards are not met, self-criticism occurs. As a result, a perfectionist may experience elements of anxiety, low self-esteem, avoidance, depression and exaggerated reactions to mistakes.

So, how does perfectionism start in children? Research has shown that early childhood experiences may play a role. For example, children with highly critical parents or guardians are prone to exhibit traits of perfectionism, and more so if the child perceives that their parents expect them to be perfect. A child's own temperament also factors into their perfectionist tendencies, especially if they are highly sensitive and prone to anxiety.

What are features of perfectionism in children?

Perfectionist children tend to think very rigidly and experience life through a different lens. The following expressions are not uncommon in their regular dialogue:

- "I must get 90% or higher on my exam."
- "I must make sure I am the best in my class."
- "This bad mark means that I'll never do well."
- "If I make an error, I will be a complete failure."
- "I messed up every ball in that game. I played terribly."



For more context, columnist Lauren Richards wrote of her younger years, *"In the pursuit of perfection, I put off important projects for fear of making a mistake. I spent endless amounts of time choosing the "right" outfit and I even micromanaged every word that came out of my mouth. Eventually, I reached a point where everything I did, no matter how insignificant, was put under a microscope. From the way I walked to the way I ate food, nothing was safe from criticism."*

These are thinking patterns that demonstrate how perfectionist children tend to see the world through a distorted lens. By centering on experiences or information that confirms their underlying fears, their best efforts will never be good enough. Not only do these feelings create self-doubt, it also contaminates many of their positive experiences, leads to an unhealthy lifestyle, and interferes with the goals they want to accomplish. Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg writes, "The thought of not doing well may prevent children and teens from thinking outside the box, thus limiting their creative and innovative potential. Fear of failure may cause them to avoid a task entirely or go out of their way to seem indifferent about it."

Ways to help your child avoid the pitfalls of perfectionism

Here are some ways to help your child or teenager avoid and even overcome the negative effects of perfectionism.

Give effective praise and criticism

Grow a growth mindset. Research has proven how praise and criticism can lead to a "fixed mindset", rather than a healthier "growth mindset". Children who are praised for being *smart* are more likely to develop a fixed mindset as they learn to fear being seen as anything else. Children who are noticed for their effort, instead, take on a passion for growth as they learn to believe that their intelligence can be developed with their exerted effort. When children with a growth mindset don't do something as well as they hoped, they don't see themselves as failures, but as learners. They feel successful when they learn to do a task that they could not do before, whereas a child with a fixed mindset feels smart when they avoid errors.

What to Say

Instead of saying, *"I just expect you to do your best"*, say:

- *"All I expect is for you to put in a good effort. I care less about your grades and more about the fact that you are learning."*

Perfectionism: How to Help Your Child Avoid the Pitfalls

ISSUE #04
April 2025

Focus on the process rather than the outcome.

You can ask your child or teen questions like:

- “Do you think you spent a reasonable amount of time working on the projects (or studying for the test)?”
- “Is there something you wish you did differently that you can change the next time?”

Define success and recognize realistic heroes

Children, teens and even young adults believe that recognition requires perfection. Society perpetuates this messaging through the number of followers of beautiful and fit social media influencers, or the pedestalization of the highest scoring athletes or the top-grossing recording artists. Our households see that celebrities receive attention and accolades when they are at the top of their game. Parents can counteract this message in a couple of ways.

Clarify and communicate your views of success.

Consider and discuss:

- Happiness, as well as contentment
- Commitment to hard work, determination and perseverance
- Capacity to accept and learn from constructive criticism
- Being accountable for your actions and making amends when needed

Point out the real heroes all around us. Direct your child's attention to acts of kindness and goodwill by your neighbors, friends and family. Highlight those individuals who choose to teach and heal, as well as those who choose to protect and serve our communities. When children see realistic heroes and hear positive messages about the actions of genuine and accessible people, they start to learn about and even value a broader definition of success.

Express unconditional acceptance

Unconditional acceptance is the best antidote to unhealthy perfectionism

The most essential component in raising resilient children is the connections you form out of accepting them unconditionally and holding them to high but reasonable expectations. These high expectations should not focus on grades or performance, though. The focus of a parent or guardian's expectations should be on effort, generosity, empathy and other core values.

Value balance, self-care and opportunities for self-discovery

Learn to prune. Extracurricular activities are important in enriching children's learning experiences. However, children also need downtime and self-driven play to discover their skills and passions. Help your child find balance in managing daily life tasks. Know that when children and teens feel overwhelmed, they can't focus on anything or learn where they need to excel. Therefore, when it is time to cut back on these extra activities in order to find balance, don't think of it as “quitting”, but instead as “pruning”. When you can prune away what no longer interests your child, then their strongest interests and greatest talents will flourish.

In the words of columnist Richards, *“walking the road to perfection is a daunting undertaking, but try as you might, you'll never reach the end. The truth is perfection isn't possible to attain, and no amount of work and time will change that. While this may come as a hard pill to swallow, it can also be liberating to know that no one, regardless of how great their lives may appear, is perfect.”*

Adapted from: Kenneth, G. R. (2013, October 29). *Perfectionism: How to help your child avoid the pitfalls*. Perfectionism: How to Help Your Child Avoid the Pitfalls. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/young-adult/Pages/What-Fuels-Perfectionism.aspx>

Gnilka, P. B., Ashby, J. S., & Noble, C. M. (2012). Multidimensional perfectionism and anxiety: differences among individuals with perfectionism and tests of a coping-mediation model. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 90(4), 427-436. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2012.00054.x>

Richards, L. (2022, June 13). *Opinion: Perfectionism isn't a Flex Technician*. https://www.technicianonline.com/opinion/opinion-perfectionism-isn-t-a-flex/article_bc459d26-e534-11ec-a9d2-ef2f59ed96b9.html