

Gifted Student Burnout

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Abstract

Gifted Student Burnout may be part of the occurrence of fatigue that can affect students of all ages. This can range from elementary to high school. Burnout in gifted education is a relatively new area of research, as burnout research in students and the gifted programs themselves are also new. The potential causes and potential solutions will be used to differentiate classroom instruction for gifted students. As gifted students grow and begin to want more control over their learning, instruction will need to be adjusted to help students stay invested in their academics. There are possible outlying effects that the home life of gifted students may add, but also ways that home lives and extracurricular activities help students through their burnout experiences. Outcomes are that the classroom environment and how gifted students are treated throughout their years in school may have the biggest effect on the chance or rate of burnout.

Keywords: burnout, school, extracurriculars, history, causes, effects, solutions, adaptive perfectionism, maladaptive perfectionism

Gifted Student Burnout

A History of Gifted Student Education

In the history of Education, a gifted student specialty in the field is new. The first documented account of gifted student education in the United States occurred in 1868, when a superintendent of public schools for St. Louis, Missouri, William Torey Harris, implemented the earliest systematic attempt in public schools to educate students identified as gifted or above average. Little happened between then and 1901, when the first private school for gifted children opened for seventh through ninth grades. From around 1905 through 1910, official research began into the unknown field of gifted and talented education. In 1925 Lewis Terman published a book titled *Genetic Studies of Genius* (Ford, 2012). This was the first volume of five in total that went on to span decades. This research helped launch Lewis Terman's reputation as the father of the gifted education movement (Jolly, 2018).

In 1954 the first national advocacy organization for gifted students was created. This organization was called the National Association for Gifted Children and it was founded by Ann Isaacs. This was around the same time that the concept of gifted education was becoming a national topic, and with Russia's launch of Sputnik in 1957, the United States began to take it seriously. The Space Race caused the U.S. to reexamine its own education system. The government placed large amounts of money into identifying the best and brightest students who would potentially profit from advanced math, science, and technology courses. In 1958 the National Defense Education Act was passed (Jolly, 2018). This was the first large scale effort by the federal government to invest in gifted education. It took another 16 years for there to be any other actions regarding gifted education to take place at the federal level (Ford, 2012).

In 1974 the Office of the Gifted and Talented, housed within the U.S Department of Education, was given official status. *National Excellence: The Case for Developing America's Talent* was issued by the U.S. Department of Education in 1993. It outlines the neglect of those considered gifted and talented and provided recommendations for the improvement of gifted and talented education. This study also redefined what it meant to be gifted and talented. It introduced the most theoretical definition, but was useful in that it focused on talent, talent development, potential, and comparison within each student's age, experience, or environment. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education redefined gifted and talented yet again with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act. Throughout the short history of gifted and talented education, there have been major shifts in emphasis (Ford, 2012). "The disadvantaged gifted only become visible once the importance of environmental conditions was recognized and accounted for" (Taber, 2020, p. 3). This is one of the reasons why the field of gifted and talented education is continuing to grow as more attention can be focused on it outside of when the United States federal government deems it necessary.

Defining Gifted Students and Gifted Student Burnout

Throughout its history, gifted education has been given many possible options on what constitutes a student to be gifted and talented. Gifted students have been described as "quick thinking, quick of understanding and have remarkable memories: they learn easily and remember what they have learnt" (Phillips & Lindsay, 2006, p. 59). Students of all ability levels deal with stress. These students experience stress because of the pressures associated with schoolwork. A variety of academic, personal, and emotional issues can be a student's stressor if it lasts long enough or happens often enough (Kaplan, 1990). Gifted students have the potential to be more susceptible to this stress since they have a heightened sensitivity to their surroundings, including

expectations of others and ones they set for themselves. Gifted students are constantly reaching for excellence, and this can cause an increase in stress. “The pressure to excel...self-doubt (the ‘imposter’ syndrome), and the need to prove their giftedness can drain the energy of gifted students and result in additional stress” (Kaplan, 1990, p. 2). Burnout itself is described as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment” (Rahmati, 2015, p.49). The basic, core individual stress component of burnout is the emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is the state of feeling emotionally worn out or just drained, and the feelings of one’s emotional resources being depleted (Rahmati, 2015).

Burnout was not first unearthed within the study of gifted student education, but it was initially explored in the human service professions and then in other professional experiences. It was not until recently that students and school aged children became the focus of burnout research. Research into burnout shifted from the workplace to the school setting as similar indicators were noticed in those pursuing college degrees (Gerber et al., 2015). Burnout is still viewed as a burnout of one’s work, but with students (gifted students especially) school is considered their work.

As of 2022, there are multiple types of gifts and talents. These include intellectual ability, general and specific ability, creative ability, leadership ability, and visual and performing arts ability. Intellectual ability is typically discussed when people think of a student being gifted. Intellectual ability is seen when an “individual evidences or shows the potential for a high level of abstract reasoning, advanced vocabulary, advanced academic performance, excellent memory, and an accelerated rate of learning” (Ford, 2012, p. 91). To discover whether a student has intellectual ability, individual or group intelligence tests are usually administered. General and specific ability was highlighted in Renzulli’s (1986) three-ring conceptualization of giftedness

theory. General ability is “the capacity to process information, to integrate experiences that result in appropriate and adaptive responses in new situations, and to engage in abstract thinking” and specific ability is “the capacity to acquire knowledge and the ability to perform in one or more activities in a specialized area” (Ford, 2012, p. 92). Renzulli’s three-ring conceptualization of giftedness also emphasized that giftedness is the result of multiple aspects where students perform in an above average way. These include the students’ ability, task commitment, and creativity. Renzulli, through this theory, acknowledged that gifts and talents are domain specific, identified and supported underachievers, and stressed that task commitment is not the same as motivation (Ford, 2012).

These two abilities and the overall emphasis of Renzulli’s theory is that students are not always gifted in every subject area. Achievement tests are used to help identify the general and specific academic ability in students, with aptitude tests sometimes being used. Creative ability is where “the individual demonstrates or shows potential for high levels of performance in such areas as divergent thinking, elaboration, flexibility, originality, and fluency” (Ford, 2012, p. 91). It is more difficult to assess whether a student has creative ability as there are not standardized test options. Leadership ability is where an “individual demonstrates or shows potential for high levels of performance in organization and management, persuasion, communication and public speaking, and interpersonal relations and skills” (Ford, 2012, p. 92). While this talent is useful, it can be used in negative ways. For example, it is often used for corruption by those in power. Students who have visual and performance arts ability “demonstrate or show potential for high levels of ability to perform in areas such as dance, music, drama, and art” (Ford, 2012, p. 92). Testing would not give the most accurate results with this ability, so a panel of experts is usually used to determine whether a student is gifted in visual and performing arts.

As previously mentioned, there are multiple theories related to gifted student education. Another theory is Sternberg's (1985) Triarchic theory of intelligence. In this theory he emphasized three types of intelligence: componential, experiential, and contextual (Ford, 2012). The final theory is Gardner's (1983) popular theory of multiple intelligences. In this theory, Gardner stated that different psychological processes are involved in the current blanket definition of intelligence. His theory is important in child-centered education and using individual educational strategies, like working with students and adjusting differentiation plans according to the student's specific intelligence and creating an energizing environment where students are excited to learn.

The phrase "gifted student burnout" was developed by previous and current gifted students to describe their need for perfectionism, subconscious aversion to any sort of change, and poor self-esteem (Salmela-Aro et al., 2009). Students then noticed that as they grew and involved themselves in more difficult classes, they were not as prepared and skilled as they had been in previous class levels. Adolescents on academic tracks experience more exhaustion at school than those on a vocational or general track. As students grow and their class complexity levels increase, especially within an academic specific track, gifted students might perceive the classrooms as more competitive (Salmela-Aro et al., 2008).

Why Gifted Student Burnout is Important to Recognize

Gifted student burnout is important to recognize because of the possible implications and effects it can have on students and on communities as a whole. "During the early years, school may be easy, with minimum effort required for success. If students are not challenged, they conclude that 'giftedness' means instant learning, comprehension, and mastery, and that outstanding achievement follows naturally" (Kaplan, 1990, p.3). This is not the mindset that

students should adopt. It is important that gifted students understand that the minimum effort way of thinking and attitude towards school is dangerous because it makes their learning process more difficult (Kaplan, 1990). As the students get older, school becomes more strenuous and, due to the lack of challenges, gifted students are not equipped with the correct habits and strategies to help them succeed. Students may then feel that they are no longer gifted, and their self-concept is challenged and shaken. This is the mindset of a burnt-out gifted student. Burnout is a potential waste of the capital that students, particularly gifted students, provide (Gerber et al., 2015). It is also important for gifted students to understand that the burnout experiences they have stem from certain reasons and that they possibly have solutions. Gifted students tend to accept responsibility for a variety of activities including leadership roles and part-time jobs. This adds to their workload and students should know whether these extra opportunities are contributing to the burnout or helping release stress.

Causes of Burnout

Intrinsic Causes

There are many possible causes of gifted student burnout. Some are intrinsic and others are extrinsic. Some intrinsic habits of gifted students and possible causes of burnout include perfectionism and self-handicapping. Self-handicapping involves any action, choice, or performance that enhances the opportunity to excuse failure and accept credit for success. Students who adopt self-handicapping strategies allow for their academic failures to be explained by external factors. This can be shown in students claiming they have testing anxiety or illness, procrastinating, and not doing the needed work (Alodat et al., 2020). Students use these excuses to keep and raise a positive self-esteem in their own eyes and increase their image in others'

eyes. These methods try to draw the attention away from their poor (or not up to student standards) grades and pushes the blame onto other reasons.

Students are motivated to self-handicap for many reasons, including their fear of appearing less able to others, to protect their own self-esteem in the event of failure, and to bolster self-esteem in the event of success. Over time it negatively impacts students' self-concept and their self-efficacy (Gadbois & Sturgeon, 2011). Self-handicapping is also connected to other negative outcomes such as poor ability to adjust, negative coping strategies and poor study habits. Self-handicapping strategies are often employed in situations and on assignments where the task is seen as an important judge of the student's ability (Zuckerman et al., 1998). "Greater self-handicapping is strongly related to poorer academic performance. It is logical that poor prior performance, while related to future academic performance, would also be related to future tendencies to self-handicap" (Gadbois & Sturgeon, 2011, p. 209). At the core, the majority of students use self-handicapping practices and excuses to make them feel satisfied. While external environmental factors like school, parents, and competitive environments play a role in the decision to employ these tactics, personal factors are usually more important than environmental factors.

While perfectionism and self-handicapping are connected, perfectionism is a more common trait seen in gifted students. It is defined as the tendency to set excessively high standards where only total success and total failure exist as outcomes (Alodat et al., 2020). There are two different types of perfectionism: Adaptive and Maladaptive. Adaptive perfectionism consists of students striving towards their goals in a healthy manner, with little to no distress. Maladaptive perfectionism is often connected to students frequently doubting their own actions, preoccupation with avoiding mistakes, and dissatisfaction. Maladaptive perfectionism is also

linked to poor mental health and difficulties in social situations. Some ways to visibly identify this type of perfectionism is when students are seen excessively checking and rechecking their work, doubting their actions, and concern over their mistakes. Maladaptive perfectionism draws the most similarities to self-handicapping. Specifically in the areas of concern about what others think about the student in case of failure and a self-image that heavily relies on achievement and recognition. While perfectionism characteristics can possibly lead to self-handicapping outcomes, it is important to recognize that this mostly happens with cases of maladaptive perfectionism.

These two common characteristics seen in gifted students are important to recognize as possible causes of burnout, and sometimes they can even be results. When students go through these events and these certain mindsets with every project, test, and assignment, they begin to become extremely tired. This could eventually lead to a complete lack of motivation and drive for the students towards their schoolwork, and other activities (Alodat et al., 2020).

In Blackburn and Erickson's (1986) study on the *Predictable Crises of the Gifted Student*, they noted five developmental crises related to the academic and eventual success of a gifted student. These included developmental immaturity, underachievement, fear of success, multipotentiality, and nonsuccess. Multipotentiality can also be known as overchoice. The two specific steps in this process that potentially have the largest effect on gifted student burnout would be multipotentiality and nonsuccess. Multipotentiality often shows itself when the gifted student has to make weighty decisions. "At this stage, stress can become a debilitating factor that affects the self-esteem and subsequent success of many gifted individuals" and "making career and personal choices can be overwhelming to the gifted individual who experiences multiple interests and abilities" (Blackburn & Erickson, 1986, p. 554). Nonsuccess is seen when students

are afraid to pursue any new situation or experience unless they are guaranteed a successful outcome.

Self-efficacy is a piece of the student's learning mindset that could play into the extent of their burnout. Those who do not have self-efficacy become easily burnt out and have less ability to adapt (Rahmati, 2015). "High self-efficacy helps in feeling calm when facing activities and homework" (Rahmati, 2015, p. 54). With high self-efficacy, students were able to better adapt themselves with life changes and were able to remain enthusiastic. The higher the self-efficacy, the lower the chance of academic burnout (Rahmati, 2015).

Extrinsic Causes

An example of an extrinsic cause of student burnout is tedium. Boredom is another word used with tedium that may help people understand the idea. Tedium is a significant predictor of classroom stress, and it is linked to student burnout in many cases (Pines et al., 1981). Tedium itself is almost always a part of the burnout system. It is similar to burnout as both are states of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion (Pines et al., 1981). It is worth looking into how much and when tedium begins to play a role in gifted student burnout. This is especially because "tedium variables, intrinsic motivation, and commitment to schoolwork were significant predictors of satisfaction with school and that the tedium variables, intrinsic motivation, satisfaction with school, and extrinsic motivation were significant predictors of commitment to schoolwork" (Hoekman et al., 2005, p. 101).

Tedium, or boredom, is an emotion. It can be dispositional, situational, or both. Usually, it is a lack of challenge that is the most commonly identified cause for boredom in the classroom. Gifted students want the opportunity "to choose their own topics of study, the format of the products of their learning, the way a product is graded, and the members of learning groups"

(Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003, p. 25). Gifted students want more control over their learning, especially as they get to their middle and high school years. When gifted students feel as if they are not in control or their schooling gets repetitive, then they begin to experience boredom. Kanevsky & Keighley (2003) explained when discussing how “the students perceived learning as an essential force in their lives; one from which they derived a sense of their identity. Their learning was often self-directed and facilitated by caring teachers. Schooling, on the other hand, was generally a tiring, frustrating experience” (p. 26). Schooling and learning are considered two different things in a gifted student’s mind. “The students’ resentment and boredom evolved and escalated as they consistently experienced a lack of control, choice and challenge, complexity and support within the classroom setting. They gradually disengaged from classroom tasks and their productivity and grades decline [sic] as their boredom intensified in middle and high school.” (Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003, p. 26)

Other possible causes of burnout inside school, and the classroom specifically, would be in the way that gifted students’ instruction is differentiated. There are many different ways gifted students are accommodated in schools today. This includes acceleration or ability grouping approaches. While overall ability grouping is an effective practice, there are some methods that seem counterproductive to the advancement of gifted student education. These approaches include the separate classroom and within class programs many schools adopt (Cornell et al., 2007). Gifted students who participate in separate classroom education were studied over a two-year period in comparison to other ability grouping techniques. These students, while showing the highest achievement levels of all ability groupings, were less likely to engage in challenging coursework, felt less competent, were the most reliant on teacher guidance, more dependent on external sources of evaluation, and felt less accepted by their own peers (Cornell et al., 2007).

Any student experiencing even a small combination of these experiences would find it difficult to maintain a healthy relationship with their self-concept, school, and their mental and emotional health. Factors in a school environment that may cause burnout include work overload, lack of control, lack of reward, lack of community, value conflict, and lack of fairness (Maslach et al., 1997).

Other examples of extrinsic factors of student burnout include parental involvement. A student's home life is a large contributor to the students' outlook on life and their behavior and motivation in the classroom. Students with supportive and encouraging parents tend to increase their own motivation for their talent. Students with parents who either prematurely act as though their child is an adult or give them excessive attention are more likely to have coping issues and an overall underachieving attitude (Mudrak & Zabrodska, 2015). Those who have parents with extravagant expectations and authoritarian parenting styles are most likely to have extreme fear of failure and their self-worth tied to their expected achievement (Neumeister, 2004).

Effects of Burnout

Gifted Student Burnout is not just an isolated issue. The frustration and fatigue felt by students as they continue their education affects other aspects of their school and personal lives. Student burnout in general has been found to affect school achievement both in direct and indirect ways. These indirect effects include depressive symptoms and school engagement (Fiorilli et al., 2017). School burnout and depressive symptoms are more closely related than many may think. School burnout predicts depressive symptoms in older students and young adults (Salmela-Aro et al., 2009). As the students age, they become progressively more at risk of depressive symptoms because of a higher risk of burnout. This is likely due to the increased demands of school on students (Fiorilli et al., 2017).

Another important but often overlooked effect of burnout is school achievement. School achievement is an aspect of burnout that may seem temporary, but tends to live with the students as they grow up and adapt to their schooling environment. School achievement does not just relate to the students' grades, but to the student's drive to participate in both academic and social engagements in the school. Student burnout is also associated with educational aspirations, academic achievement, and educational track (Salmela-Aro et al., 2009). With low school achievement affecting the ways that they view their educational aspirations and their future educational track, these gifted students (and all students who experience burnout) begin to lower their own expectations of themselves and do not tend to reach as far.

There are multiple mental health effects of student burnout. These include more stress, depressive symptoms, decreased satisfaction with life, decreased mental toughness, more sleep disturbances, and a lower sleep quality (Gerber et al., 2015). Burnout can also lead to anxiety, depression, frustration, hostility, fear, low commitment, absenteeism, and reduced morale (Rahmati, 2015). As burnout becomes more severe, so do these harmful effects. Students especially seem to feel these symptoms as they get older. One of the biggest causes of gifted student burnout, academic self-handicapping, is also associated with the mental health effects of student burnout. The bigger the self-handicapping tendency, the stronger the effects like lower self-regulation, lack of deep learning approaches, lower perceived intrinsic value of learning and academic self-efficacy, greater test anxiety, and surface learning approaches (Gadbois & Sturgeon, 2011).

Burnout can have negative effect on a gifted students' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her capacity to perform behaviors that are necessary to reach specific performance goals (Bandura, 1977). When these gifted students believe they fail at a task or

concept because of their low academic ability, they begin to show signs of low self-efficacy which may lead to the mental health effects mentioned above. These characteristics of a low self-efficacy are dealt with by students in different ways. As Roeser et al., (1998) stated, “some children internalize the cause of academic failure and, in so blaming themselves, generate negative emotion-laden beliefs about their competence as learners, the value of schooling, and their self-worth” (p.161). Self-efficacy is an interesting aspect of gifted student burnout as it has the potential to be both a cause and an effect.

As has been seen so far, it is evident that the academic difficulties and the emotional difficulties that gifted students face are related to each other. This is similar to how many cause and effect relationships of gifted student burnout are reciprocally related. “Academic failures can lead to negative emotions and negative emotions can lead to academic failures” (Roeser et al.,1998, p. 167).

Ways Gifted Student Burnout Can Be Prevented and the Effects Lessened In School

Schools are critical to ensuring gifted students avoid or lessen the severity of their burnout. Schools are important aspects of society where students are able to grow intellectually and emotionally. It is important to create conditions where this growth and learning is successful. With successful schooling, the student’s mental health can be solidified (Roeser et al., 1998). The education system will always be a place where students can turn to improve their knowledge and sometimes even escape from other areas of their lives. It is important the schools do their jobs in service to gifted students, and every student, to ensure that schools are a safe place to better themselves. In regard to self-handicapping in gifted student burnout, Gadbois & Sturgeon (2011) addressed that a change in a learning environment or classroom can affect the students’

willingness to self-handicap. If teachers emphasize the importance of study habits and specific learning practices, students may not emphasize the amount of studying but the quality of their habits.

One way that children and adolescents can become better students is through motivation. Motivation can be expressed in two ways: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation includes learning for one's own sake or for internal personal satisfaction, self-directed learning, and non-competitiveness. Extrinsic motivation is seen in learning driven by external factors such as rewards or threats of punishment, student dependence, teacher directed learning, and competitiveness (Phillips & Lindsay, 2006). A technique that has been seen to help gifted students improve motivation and avoid burnout, is the use of optimism. While it is true that intrinsic optimism will achieve the best results, teachers have the opportunity to instill an optimistic mindset in students that will carry them throughout their lives. Optimism is indirectly associated with satisfaction with school and commitment to schoolwork. "The relationships between students' perceived coping resources (motivation and optimism) and the way these variables combine... is likely to provide the most useful insights, in motivational terms, for the education of gifted students" (Hoekman et al., 2005, p.108). If optimism is modeled and encouraged in the classroom, students will be more likely to adopt that mindset as well and in return cope with the stresses of school and factors of burnout more successfully, or possibly even avoid burnout all together.

Another way that is helpful regarding the internal effects of gifted student burnout is in the way the school deals with the skewed self-esteem and self-concept issues that will inevitably present themselves. Delcourt, Cornell, & Goldberg (2007) addressed this by saying, "Parents and teachers should anticipate this phenomenon and be prepared to address it by helping students

understand that they naturally make comparisons between themselves and their peers, but that they should also learn how to focus on ways to improve their own performance by comparing their own past endeavors with their present efforts and future goals” (p.377) when discussing higher perceptions of their own scholastic capabilities.

Schools can help gifted students avoid or limit burnout in the ways in which they educate their gifted students. Neihart (2007) recommended that every gifted student should have the option of acceleration (early entrance to school, early entrance to college, grade skipping) but it should be routine for those considered highly gifted. All students being considered for acceleration programs should be screened for social readiness, emotional maturity, and even motivation for acceleration.

Ability grouping is another way that schools are currently accommodating gifted students, specifically in elementary schools. There are four different ways ability grouping is seen in school systems. These include within-class programs, pullout programs, separate class programs, and special school programs. The methods shown to be most successful include the pullout programs and the special school programs (Cornell, & Goldberg, 2007). Overall, Neihart (2007) stated that ability grouping, while often successful, should not be promoted for all gifted students. Even though it is an effective educational practice.

While “no single program fully addressed all the psychological and emotional needs of students...” (Cornell et al., 2007, p. 378), if teachers and schools take research-based findings like these and apply them into the classroom, there should be more success in the education of gifted students and the avoidance of or limiting of their burnout. However, “it is paramount that those who initiate these programs constantly monitor their progress” (Cornell et al., 2007, p. 378). A balance between cognitive and affective learning outcomes is key to a functional

program. Students will also benefit from the teacher and staff at their school being properly trained and prepared to deal with students performing at a gifted level. Neihart (2007) also emphasized that staff development should be one of the highest priorities in the acceleration of gifted students.

Another approach studied was the early intervention of counseling into gifted student education. Blackburn and Erickson (1986) placed an emphasis on counseling to help support the mental and emotional health of gifted students beginning at an early age. While this study focused on counseling in the typical sense in some ways, it overall concentrated upon the idea of a larger and stronger support system for gifted students as they face their own unique set of challenges as they progress in their school system. Counseling could be a useful tool in school systems to combat gifted student burnout. It is seen that mental health initiatives are successful in elementary schools, but middle school has some unresolved issues that need to continue to be studied (Lendrum et al., 2013). Since school settings are determinants of mental health, “the way that different schools arrange curriculum offerings, organize student groups, emphasize excellence, or respond to bullying...will have particular potentials to influence students’ mental health” (Askill-Williams & Lawson, 2015, p. 251-252).

In many cases, gifted students benefited from the fact that their environments did not emphasize immediate results but were oriented in future development. This can result in students being encouraged to pursue their own learning and quest for new knowledge, a stronger ability to cope with obstacles presented in life, and a personal responsibility to continue their educational growth (Mudrak & Zabrodska, 2015).

Some specific aspects of the classroom that teachers could adjust would include the assessments for gifted students. There are multiple types of diagnostic, formative, and

summative assessments that would keep gifted students engaged. These include portfolio assessments, graduated rubrics, anchoring activities, choices and options, open-ended activities, literature circles, flexible grouping, independent study, learning contracts, multiple levels of questions, problem-based learning and simulations and tiered activities. While all of these assessment possibilities would be great to include in any classroom, there are a few even in this list that would particularly help gifted student development, and hopefully avoid burnout (Ford, 2012). Portfolio assessment is an opportunity where the students get to showcase what they know. Anchoring activities can be completed before class as a way to get students prepared for school, or as an extension option. These activities can relate to the Standard of Learning or be used to further learning in other areas. Choices and options can include questions, assignments, and tasks in separate groups and the students get to choose the activity. Learning contracts begin as an agreement with the teacher and student (also the student's parent) and the teacher specifies the skills the student should have learned by the end of the project or commitment and the student identifies the methods necessary for completing the task (Ford, 2012).

In any classroom environment students, especially gifted students, want to feel a sense of control, choice, challenge, complexity, and caring (Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003). While this is specifically to combat boredom (which can eventually lead to burnout) it is a smart concept to incorporate into any classroom, at any time. These five aspects could help any student, not just those classified as "gifted and talented". Gifted students are more motivated and able to showcase their knowledge when they learn material that is appropriate for their interests and abilities (Kiuru et al., 2008).

At Home

Ways students can avoid burnout

One technique that students could attempt to employ would be physical activity. Light to moderate physical activity has been shown to reduce burnout. Overall, the more physical activity, the less the symptoms of burnout will affect students (Gerber et al., 2015). With this information, physical activity would be a useful preventative measure for the symptoms of burnout. Extra-curricular activities have also helped gifted students succeed. Participating in these activities involve a student pursuing an interest that they were drawn to and chose themselves. This can strengthen the motivation to achieve and succeed in the students' extracurricular activities and academic responsibilities. "Even though there is a large amount of time spent devoted to these extracurricular activities, there is little evidence that these activities are to the detriment of the students' schoolwork" (Phillips & Lindsay, 2006, p. 68).

There are also some techniques that gifted students can employ to deal with stress (and burnout). If students are able to take a break and focus on another task, they can renew their mindset when going back to the source of the stress. It would also be helpful for the students to confront the source of the stress. They could either get the hardest work out of the way first or possibly ask for an extension if needed. Another helpful strategy is to talk about the source of stress. Students can find a good listener and externally process the stressful assignment or situation to get to possible solutions. It is beneficial to learn skills and attitudes that make the stressful tasks easier and more successful, like practical organization strategies and time-management skills, breaking down a large project into smaller pieces, and learning how to say no. Students can also try to shift their perspective using optimism or take time out of their day and stressful task to participate in a relaxing and satisfying activity (Kaplan, 1990).

Parental Role

Parents have the opportunity to play an important role in their child's development as a student in general, and in preventing student burnout. The definition of parent involvement is "parents' work with schools and with their children to benefit their children's educational outcomes and future success" (Hill et.al, 2004, p. 1491). Parent involvement plays a major part in continuing and preserving academic engagement and strengthening the student's mental health (Wang & Seikh-Khalil, 2014). It is known that parents play a major role in the students' educational goals and their attitudes toward school and academics in general. "When parents are knowledgeable about school activities, they can respond in a variety of potentially helpful ways, such as helping their child study for a test, locating materials for an upcoming presentation, or structuring time for homework" (Im et al., 2016, p.965). Parents who keep tabs on their student's performance and talk about the importance of education may also be a part of the positive psychological well-being of their child which in turn reduces the student's emotional distress.

There are different ways that parents can be involved in their child's academic and educational life. This can be through school-based involvement, home-based involvement, or academic socialization. School involvement includes parent-teacher communication, attendance at school events, and volunteering at school functions. Home-based involvement includes providing a structured homework time and a structured leisure time. Academic socialization is seen through communication of parental expectations about schoolwork and education's importance, encouraging the education and career goals of their children, and making plans and preparations with adolescents that support their future goals. "Parental involvement in the form of academic socialization, in particular, allows for parents to demonstrate their concern for their children's well-being and openly communicate with them, while also providing a scaffold for adolescents' growing independence" (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014, p. 612). Parents and a

healthy home life are helpful in the support of their gifted students' motivation. "Even as early as kindergarten, children whose families were rated as cohesive were described by teachers as more socially competent, less hyperactive, and less likely to display anxious or depressed internalizing behaviors" (Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2014, p. 201).

The Overarching Relationship Between Gifted Student Education and Burnout

From its humble beginnings in the St. Louis, Missouri School Systems, the field of gifted student education, and as a result, research in gifted student burnout, has grown immensely. The movement for more knowledge of those considered gifted started in the progressive movement of education but expanded as the 1900s went on. From Lewis Terman's book the *Genetic Studies of Genius* which jumpstarted the research into the field to the start of the first national advocacy organization with the National Association for Gifted Students, gifted and talented education was on the rise in the United States (Jolly, 2018). The federal government picked up on the movement sporadically with the National Defense Education Act (1958), National *Excellence: The Case for Developing America's Talent* (1993), and the No Child Left Behind Act (2002). Throughout the development of gifted and talented education programs, it was a known fact that in many places, gifted education was only important when the talents of the gifted students were needed in some way. Throughout the early 21st century, gifted and talented education has become more mainstream and research into the topic is more common. Even though there is still a long way to go, specifically with gifted student burnout, the strides made for students considered gifted and talented to help them reach their full potential has been key to ensuring effective teaching and that school settings reach all students (Ford, 2012).

In the United States, a gifted student has been redefined multiple times throughout its history. A general definition of students who fall under the category of gifted and talented is

students who can think quickly and in complex ways through a variety of situations. They also have good memories and put that skill to good use in academic settings. Like all students, gifted students feel stress which, along with many other aspects of their home, school, or social lives, can lead to burnout. However, unlike many other students, gifted students feel an added pressure to excel due to the fact of being gifted. While burnout was originally examined and researched in professional workplace environments, it was quickly brought into the field of education, first in university students, then all the way down through elementary school (Gerber et al., 2015).

There are multiple theories about gifted student education including Renzulli's (1986) three-ring conceptualization of giftedness, Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence, and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. All of this information in relation to gifted student burnout is important to recognize because of the possible implications and effects it can have on students and learning communities. Gifted students should know why they experience burnout and how they can address the complications involved with burnout.

Between intrinsic and extrinsic possibilities, there are seemingly endless causes of burnout. Intrinsic causes include self-handicapping, perfectionism, and self-efficacy issues. Self-handicapping involves any action, choice, or performance that enhances the opportunity to excuse failure and accept credit for success (Alodat et al., 2020). This method is often used when the student feels that the task is a test of their ability, and they do not want to disappoint themselves or those around them. Using a self-handicapping strategy ensures that the result can always be blamed on an external force for negative result and can make the student feel more gifted if the result is a positive one. Perfectionism is another cause of burnout, specifically maladaptive perfectionism. While similar to self-handicapping, maladaptive perfectionism is often connected to students frequently doubting their own actions, preoccupation with avoiding

mistakes, and dissatisfaction. Other factors are multipotentiality and nonsuccess highlighted in Blackburn and Erickson's (1986) study as well as self-efficacy levels. Extrinsic causes of gifted student burnout include tedium, the classroom, and parental involvement. Tedium and boredom, while technically defined as different, are often used interchangeably in education for their similarities and close relationship with each other. Tedium is almost always a part of the burnout system (Pines et al., 1981), while classroom environments and parental involvement are situational.

The effects of gifted student burnout show that this problem not only affects the student, but it can affect those around them. Low school achievement, mental health effects, and low levels of self-efficacy are all possible effects of gifted student burnout. Specifically, the mental health effects include more stress, depressive symptoms, decreased satisfaction with life, decreased mental toughness, more sleep disturbances, lower sleep quality, anxiety, frustration, hostility, fear, low commitment, absenteeism, and reduced morale. These mental health effects are expansive and possibly severe, and they warrant gifted students receiving better help and being informed of ways to avoid stress and burnout (Roeser et al., 1998).

Gifted student burnout effects can be prevented or lessened through multiple arenas of a student's life. This can be within schools, at home with parents, and at home with the students themselves. Schools and teachers have an important job of ensuring that gifted students' needs are met in the classroom and that possible gifted student burnout is identified. Schools can increase focus on motivation and an optimistic attitude in the classroom and in the overall atmosphere of the school. If students are taught to examine difficult tasks with a positive mindset, they will be better prepared to deal with even more difficult burnout effects (Hoekman et al, 2005). It is also important to educate gifted students in ways that will benefit them the

most. This tends to be through acceleration for some students and ability grouping for others. Ability grouping techniques that are the most effective for gifted students are the pullout programs and the special school programs (Neihart, 2007). Other classroom environment strategies include assessment adjustments. In-school counseling is another helpful practice for dealing with student burnout. At home, students can even take measures themselves to avoid burnout or lessen the effects. Some of these include participating in physical activity or extra-curricular activities, developing effective time-management strategies, and taking necessary breaks (Phillips & Lindsay, 2006). Parents play a vital role in the academic life of a student, and they can also help in gifted student burnout situations. Parents who become involved early and consistently tend to have the most influence on a student's educational success (Wang & Seikh-Khalil, 2014). Parents are especially helpful when they communicate their concern for their child's academic well-being and the importance of education, as well as supporting their student's academic goals.

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