

Smart is not Easy

Grit and Growth Mindset
for the Highly Capable Student

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Agenda

- ▶ What does the research say?
 - ▶ What predicts success? IQ vs. Grit
- ▶ James & Susie
- ▶ Underachievement
- ▶ What to do about it

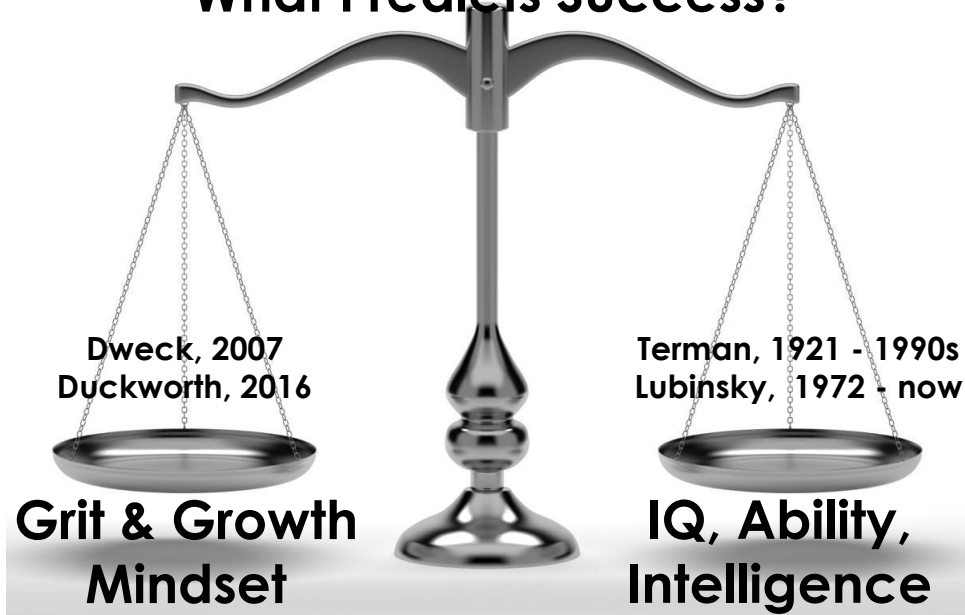
Joint paper – NWGCA & WAETAG
“What Do Seattle and NYC Have in Common?”
Equity in Highly Capable Programs

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The Central Question: What Predicts Success?



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What is *success*?

- ▶ Eminence in a field
- ▶ Advanced degrees
- ▶ High salary
- ▶ Leadership position
- ▶ Awards
- ▶ High GPA
- ▶ ...
- ▶ Happiness
- ▶ Fulfilment
- ▶ Sense of purpose
- ▶ Friends & family
- ▶ ...

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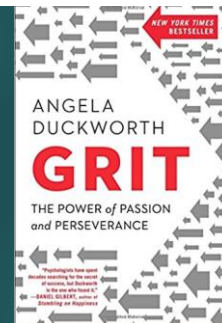
The Central Question: What Predicts Success?



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Grit (Duckworth, 2016)

- ▶ What predicted success at:
 - ▶ West Point Military Academy
 - ▶ National Spelling Bee
 - ▶ High school juniors, 8th graders
- ▶ "It wasn't social intelligence. It wasn't good looks, physical health, and it wasn't IQ. It was *grit*."
- ▶ "Self-discipline predicted academic performance more robustly than did IQ."
- ▶ **"In our data, grit is usually unrelated or even inversely related to measures of talent."**



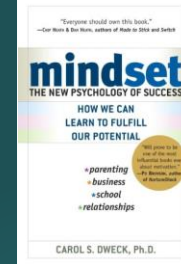
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Growth vs. Fixed Mindset (Dweck, 2007)

- ▶ “Skills and achievement come through commitment and effort.”
- ▶ “Praising children’s intelligence harms their motivation and it harms their performance.”
- ▶ “Although people may differ in every which way – in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments – everyone can grow through application and experience.”
- ▶ “Growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts.”
- ▶ “The fixed- and growth-mindset groups started with the same ability, but as time went on the growth-mindset groups clearly outperformed the fixed-mindset ones.”



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But there are complications...

- ▶ “All students can be gifted if they work hard enough and have a growth mindset”
 - ▶ “false growth mindset” (Dweck, 2015)
- ▶ “The effects [of growth mindset] were modest and were obtained only for the lower-achieving students.”
- ▶ Meta-analysis of 88 studies showed that grit is only responsible for 20% of achievement difference, grit = conscientiousness (Crede et al, 2015)
- ▶ Debunked: 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to mastery (Gladwell, 2011) (Ericsson, 1993)
 - ▶ Chess grand master ranged 728 hours to 16,120 hours of deliberate practice (Gobet & Campitelli)
 - ▶ Meta-analysis of 88 studies: deliberate practice only accounted for 18-26% of skill (Macnamara et al)

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More complications...

- ▶ Growth mindset vs. fixed mindset no different for gifted students than typical students (Mofield & Peters, 2018) (Esparza et al, 2014)
- ▶ HOWEVER, 16-49% of all students in the US are working a full year+ ahead in math and/or reading (Peters et al, 2017)

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The Central Question: What Predicts Success?



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Lubinsky/SMPY (1972 – ongoing)

- ▶ Studied 5,000 students who scored in top 3%, 1%, 0.1%, and 0.01% on SAT over 4 decades
- ▶ “achieved baccalaureates (90%, 92%), master's degrees (39%, 37%), and doctorates (28%, 24%) well beyond the base-rate expectations of 23%, 7% and 1% respectively”
- ▶ “top .01 percent of testers in their adolescence—accomplished these things at significantly higher rates even when compared to the top 1 percent of adolescent test-takers”
- ▶ BUT more than 60% of men, and 80% of women had a salary of LESS than \$100,000 (2004)
 - ▶ Most individuals were not “highly successful”
- ▶ **“grade-skippers were 60% more likely to earn doctorates or patents and more than twice as likely to get a PhD in a STEM field”**

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Terman Study (1921 – 1993...)

- ▶ 1,500 students with IQ > 140, studied over the lifetime
 - ▶ Largely middle class, white, male (and Terman meddling)
- ▶ 2/3 got bachelor's degrees (10x the expected rate)
- ▶ “Oden compared the 100 most successful and 100 least successful men in the group, defining success as holding jobs that required their intellectual gifts. The successes, predictably, included professors, scientists, doctors and lawyers. The non-successes included electronics technicians, police, carpenters and pool cleaners, plus a smattering of failed lawyers, doctors and academics. But here's the catch: the successes and non-successes barely differed in average IQ. **The big differences turned out to be in confidence, persistence and early parental encouragement.**”

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Complications here too...

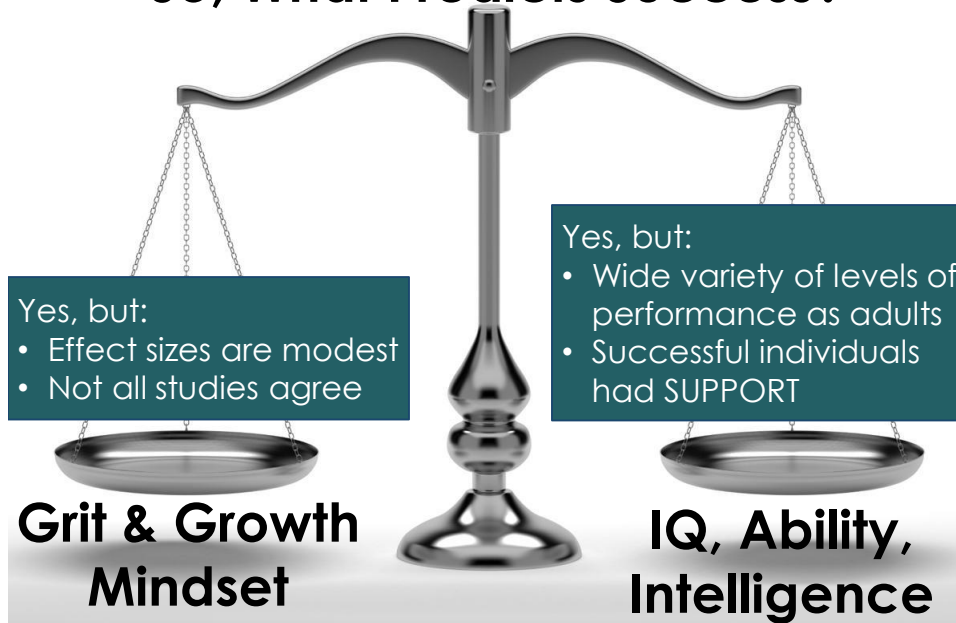
- ▶ IQ scores only explain 25%-49% of the variance of school grades
 - ▶ (Neisser et al., 1996), (Anderson & Keith, 1997)
- ▶ SAT scores predict college grades better than high school grades (Sackett, 2012)

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So, What Predicts Success?



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IQ Alone is Not Enough

- ▶ Grit & Growth Mindset may explain the difference in success for high IQ individuals
- ▶ Renzulli's 3 Ring Model of Giftedness
 - ▶ Above Average Ability, Creativity, **Task Commitment**
- ▶ But why doesn't teaching grit or growth mindset or task commitment always help? What are we missing?

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The Secret to Raising Smart Kids

HINT: Don't tell your kids that they are. More than three decades of research shows that a focus on "process"—not on intelligence or ability—is key to success in school and in life

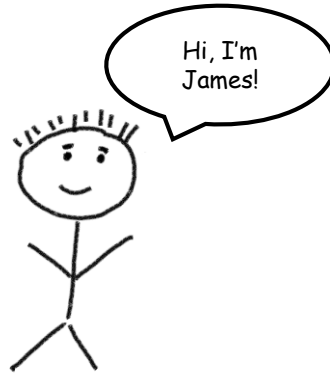
By Carol S. Dweck on January 1, 2015

A brilliant student, Jonathan sailed through grade school. He completed his assignments easily and routinely earned As. Jonathan puzzled over why some of his classmates struggled, and his parents told him he had a special gift. In the seventh grade, however, Jonathan suddenly lost interest in school, refusing to do homework or study for tests. As a consequence, his grades plummeted. His parents tried to boost their son's confidence by assuring him that he was very smart. But their attempts failed to motivate Jonathan (who is a composite drawn from several children). Schoolwork, their son maintained, was boring and pointless.

Our society worships talent, and many people assume that possessing superior intelligence or ability—along with confidence in that ability—is a recipe for success. In fact, however, more than 25 years of scientific

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Meet James

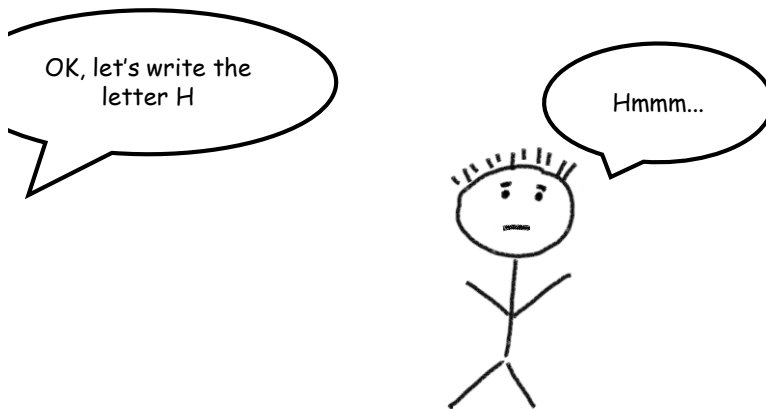


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James didn't know how to write his letters when he entered kindergarten

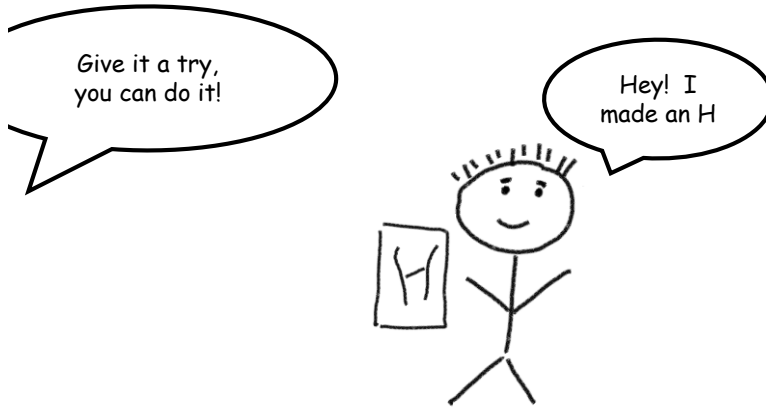


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But with some practice, he learned



Give it a try,
you can do it!

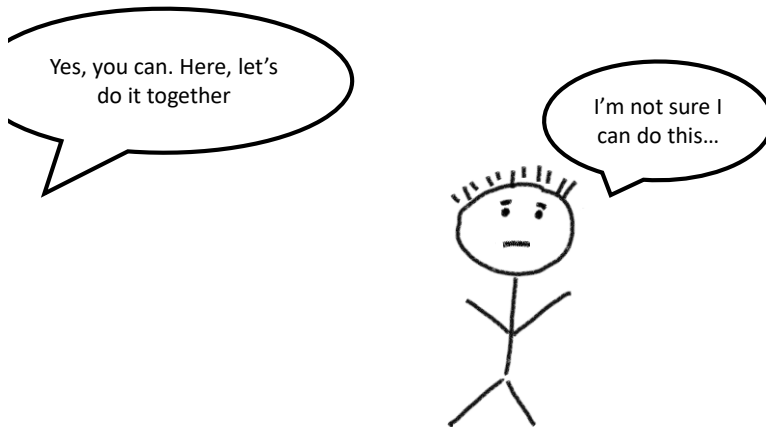
Hey! I
made an H

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He was nervous about subtraction...



Yes, you can. Here, let's
do it together

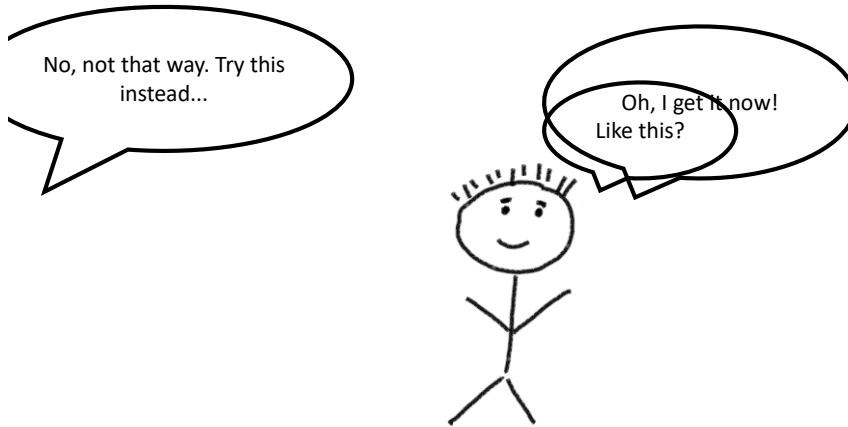
I'm not sure I
can do this...

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...and he did struggle, but the teacher helped him, and he figured it out



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In Kindergarten, James learned it was OK

- to ask questions
- to try
- to not give up at the first hurdle

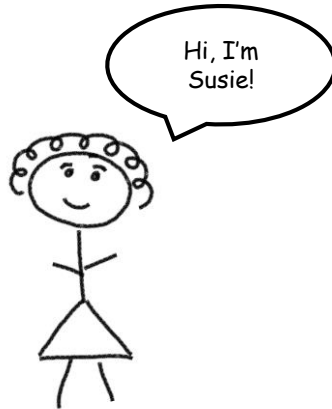


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Meet Susie

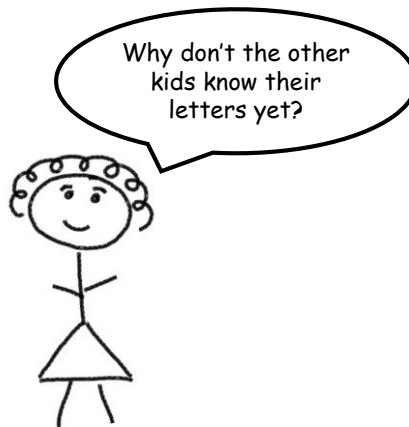


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Susie is very bright. She started Kindergarten already knowing how to sound out words, and was surprised that other kids didn't read yet.

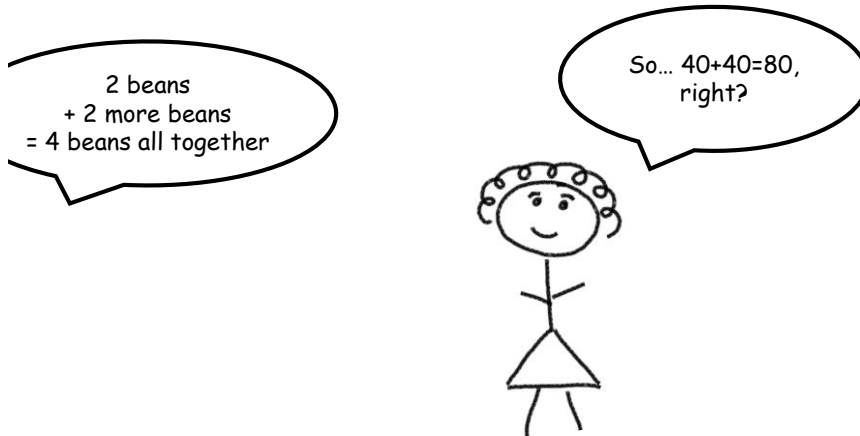


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Susie quickly grew in her abilities, seemingly without trying

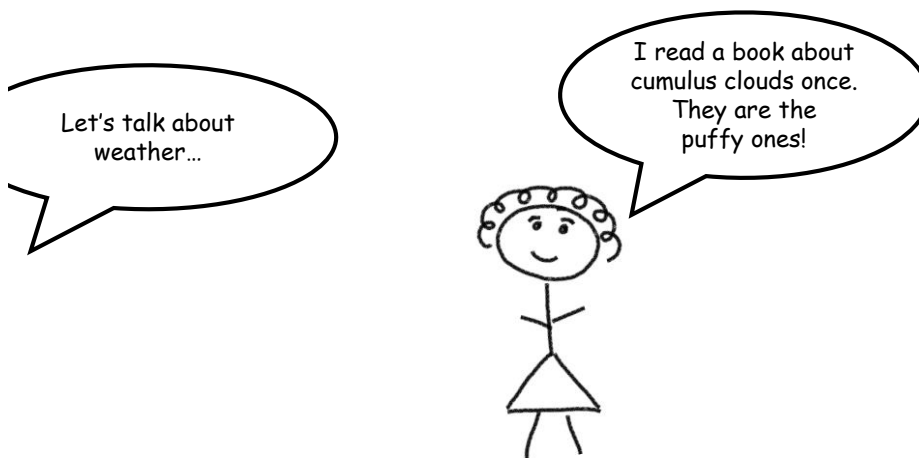


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As Susie grew, she easily picked up on new topics

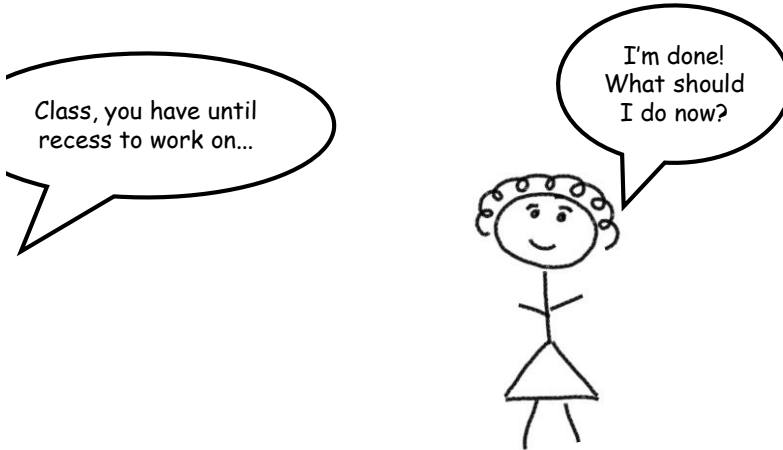


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Susie often finished assignments early



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Susie's parents were very proud of her perfect report card, and remarked at how easily she learned new things

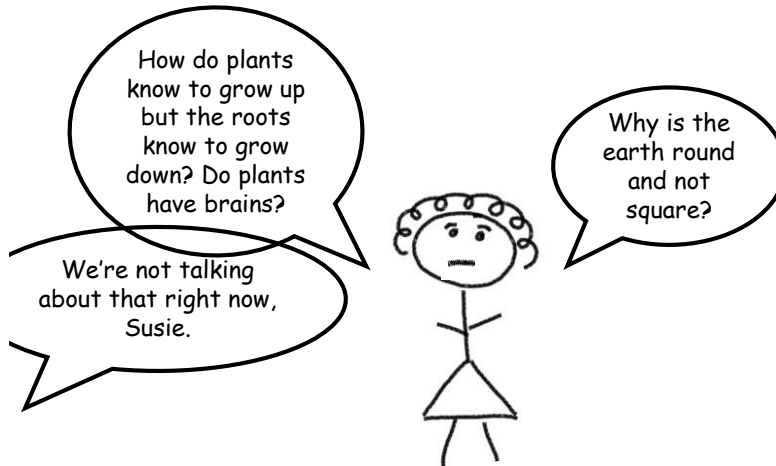


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In kindergarten, Susie asked a lot of questions



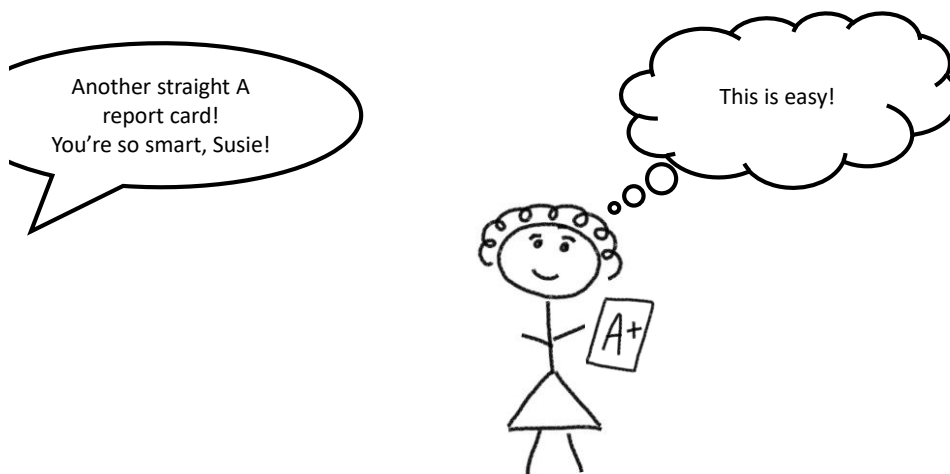
After a while, Susie stopped asking so many questions

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By 2nd grade, Susie realized that she didn't need to work very hard to do well in school.

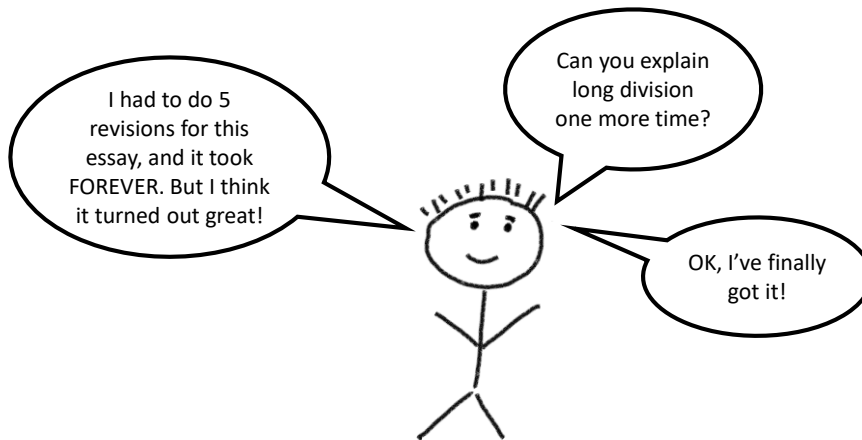


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Meanwhile, James grows, and every school year gradually presents bigger challenges...



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James has had lots of practice learning how to attack new, hard challenges.

- He has strategies
 - Don't give up.
 - Read it again.
 - Ask for help.
 - Try it, even if you're not sure how to do it at first.

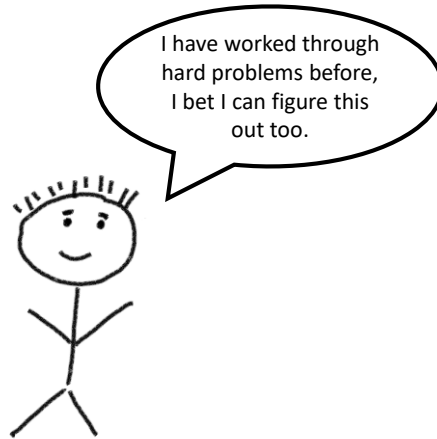
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James goes to middle school, high school, college...

All along, learning how to tackle bigger and bigger challenges.

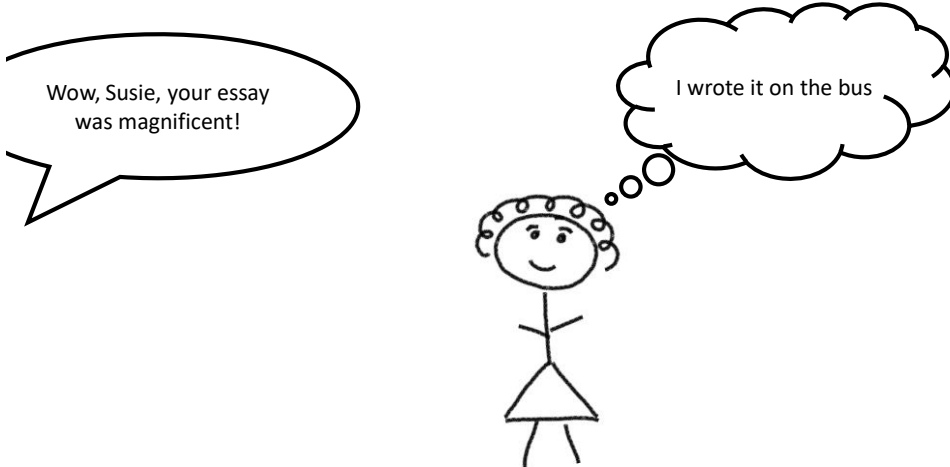


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Meanwhile, Susie continues to achieve despite not putting in any real effort

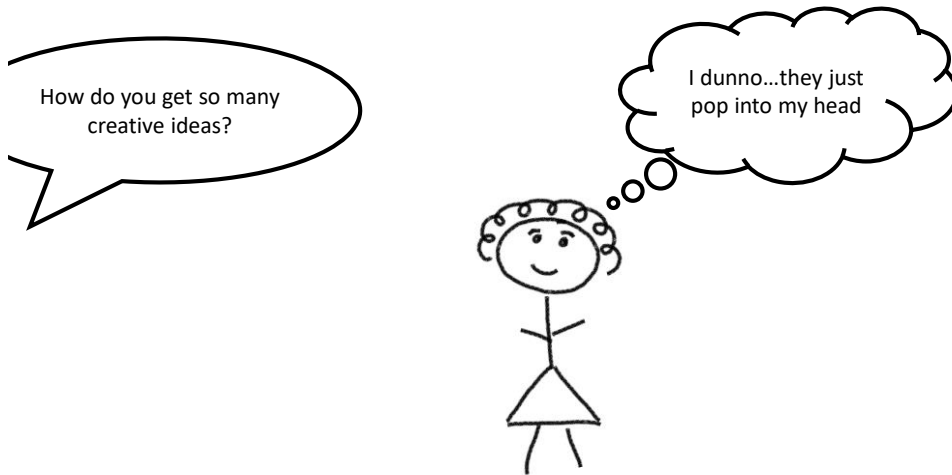


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Meanwhile, Susie continues to achieve
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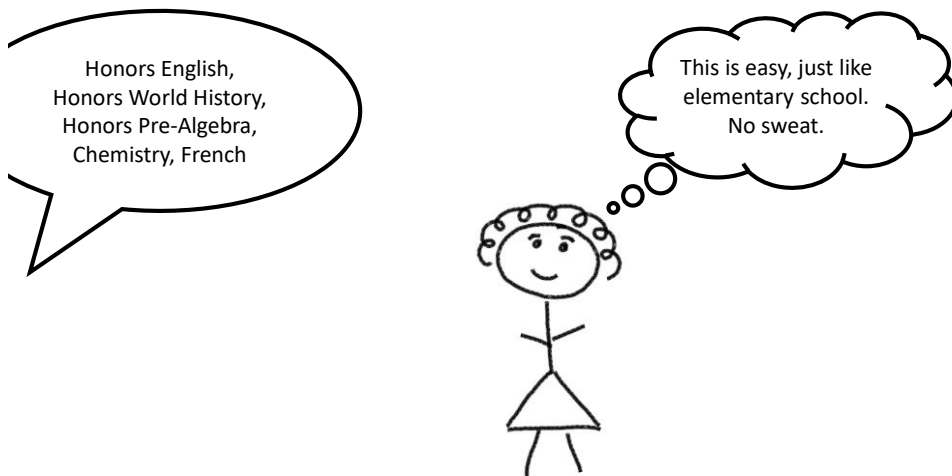


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Susie grows too. She starts middle school, and
does well in her honors classes

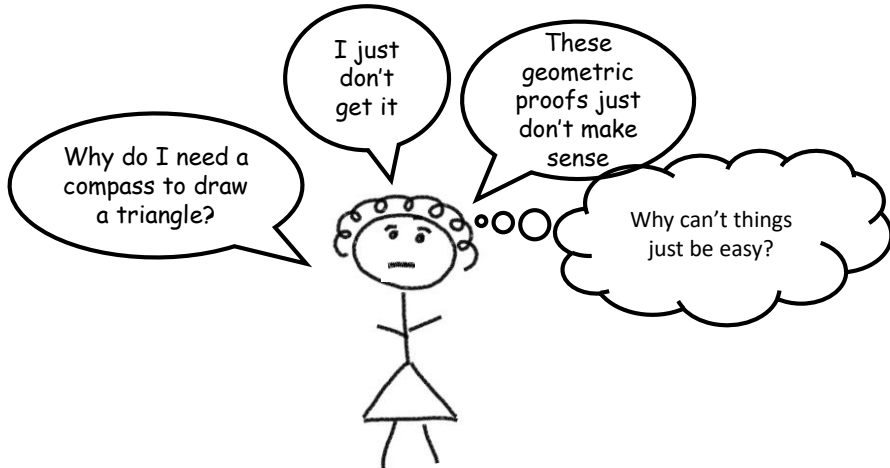


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But the next year she takes Honors Geometry...

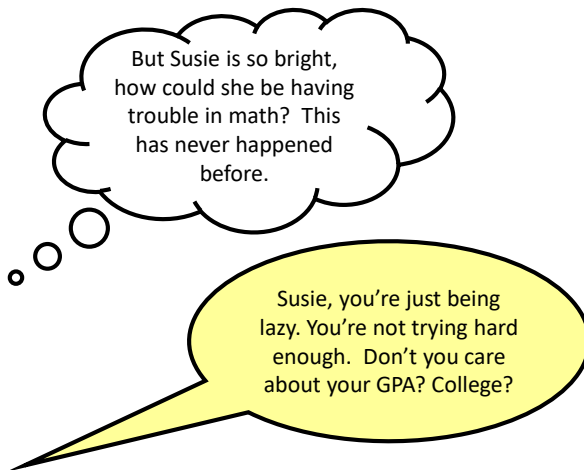


Her teacher sends a note home that Susie's grades are slipping. **SMART** \neq easy

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And her parents react...

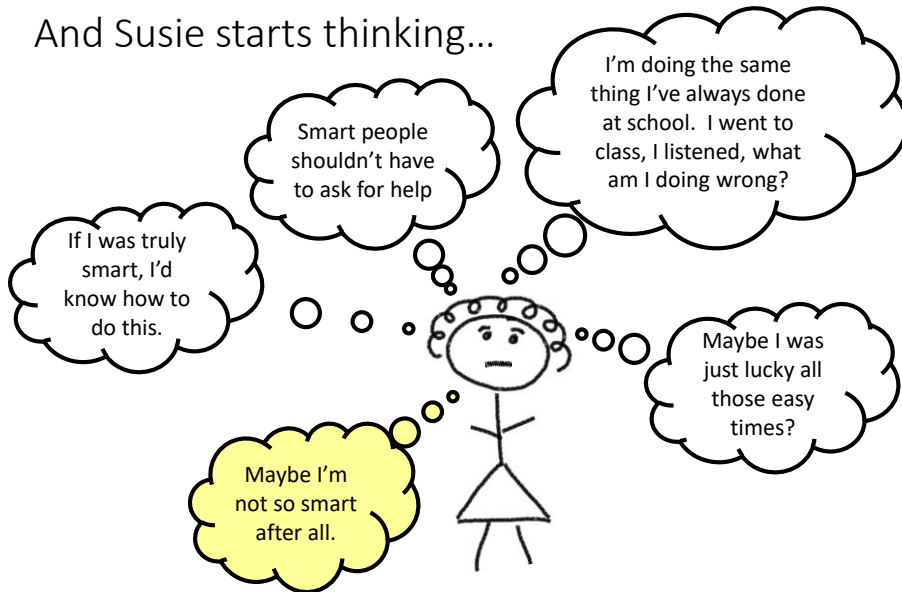


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And Susie starts thinking...



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Because Susie's elementary school experience didn't challenge her, Susie never had the opportunity to develop these skills:

- **Self-confidence**
 - to know that she can tackle a truly hard problem
- **Emotional coping skills**
 - to persevere through a challenge
- **Delayed gratification**
 - to put forth sustained effort
- **Tolerance for failure**
 - and learning from mistakes
- **Study skills**
 - to learn something you don't already understand

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Susie never learned how to LEARN

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The Secret to Raising Smart Kids

HINT: Don't tell your kids that they are. More than three decades of research shows that a focus on “process”—not on intelligence or ability—is key to success in school and in life

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We can't expect bright kids
to develop **Grit** or a **Growth Mindset...**

...if they rarely experience challenge
...if they rarely have to put forth
conscious effort

They had no opportunity to practice

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Identity Crisis: Smart ≠ Easy

- ▶ “Things have always been easy for me, because I am so smart.”
- ▶ “Uh oh, this new thing isn't easy.”
- ▶ “Maybe I'm not smart anymore...”

Some kids dig deep and adjust, but others...

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It can go really bad

- ▶ High School dropouts...
- ▶ Suicide...
- ▶ School shooters...
- ▶ Prison...

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Underachievement is common

- ▶ Has its roots in 1st, 2nd, 3rd grade
 - ▶ But often isn't visible until middle or high school
- ▶ Kids may never have to develop:
 - ▶ How to handle a real challenge
 - ▶ Persistence, perseverance, "grit"
 - ▶ Emotional coping skills, tolerance for failure
 - ▶ Study skills, time management skills
- ▶ 2e issues may be hidden until the material gets challenging enough

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Disengagement

"When they start to underachieve, the natural response for self-preservation is to actually stop caring. They're like: "I don't care about school anymore, this is stupid, this is boring." You'd rather be disengaged and do bad, than **try** and do bad.

Typically, over time we start to see elements of anxiety and depression that kick in."

- Dr. Dan Peters, Summit Center

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Smart Kids at a DIS-advantage

- ▶ They are rarely challenged in school, so have little personal experience with effort → results
- ▶ Parents who don't push elementary students to stretch themselves
 - ▶ "There's time for that later, in middle school"
 - ▶ Especially girls...
- ▶ Parents who don't allow kids to struggle
 - ▶ Learned helplessness
- ▶ It's hard to truly challenge a gifted kid
 - ▶ They are capable of a LOT more than they let on

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The brighter the child in a too-easy environment...

- ▶ ...the more you reinforce these traits
 - ▶ **Perfectionism**
 - ▶ Sensitive to criticism
 - ▶ Intense reactions to setbacks
 - ▶ Stubborn/inflexible
 - ▶ Takes feedback personally
 - ▶ Afraid to try new things
 - ▶ Dwells on mistakes
- ▶ These traits predispose kids to avoid challenge
 - ▶ Or to give up too soon
 - ▶ Avoiding risk, mistakes, failure

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“ I never recognized myself as gifted, and school came easy to me. I never learned to study until I almost failed my first year of college. Kids who weren't as smart as me, had skills that I had never learned, and understood how to work the system, it was humiliating to figure that out the hard way. ”

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“ I was never challenged in school until college, and I almost lost an academic scholarship my first semester because I had never learned how to study or work hard!

”

My whole concept of self was shaken when I finally "failed" at something.

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“ I'm not good at things I'm not good at.

”

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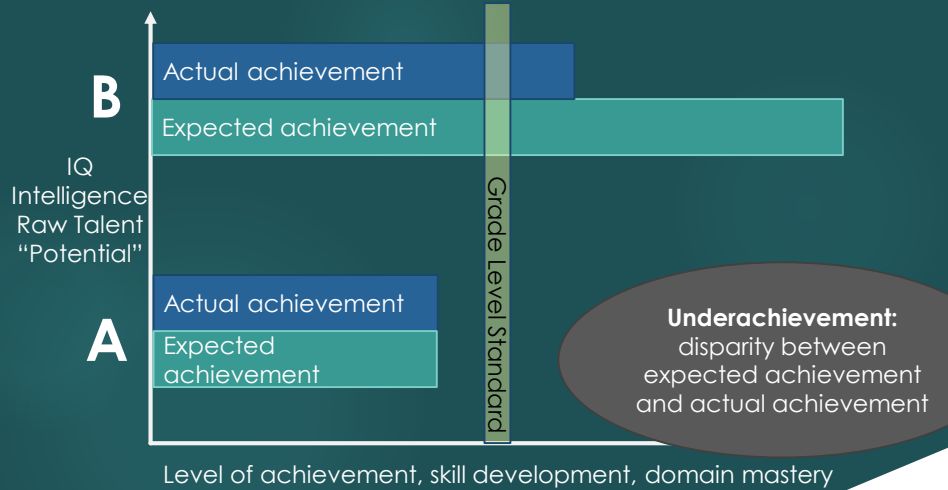
Underachievement

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What is underachievement?



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Causes of underachievement

- ▶ Lack of grit (persistence, self-discipline, etc.)
 - ▶ Fixed mindset that encounters frustration
- ▶ Under-challenging curriculum: "this is pointless"
- ▶ Dumbing down to fit in socially
- ▶ Learning disabilities (2e) may be hidden until the material gets challenging enough
- ▶ Delayed development of executive function

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Reversing Underachievement

- ▶ **Very difficult to reverse once entrenched**
- ▶ Strategies that have the most hope:
 - ▶ "Figure out the individual cause"
 - ▶ Address any learning disabilities & medical issues
 - ▶ Build on student's strengths & passions
 - ▶ Motivate with the long term picture
 - ▶ Career exposure, mentors, internships
 - ▶ **A dedicated, caring teacher that believes in me**
 - ▶ NOT: pressure from a parent
- ▶ Ideal: PREVENT underachievement by addressing needs before it becomes a problem

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Grit & Growth Mindset
might not be the whole
picture...

But it's still important

How to Build Up Grit & Growth Mindset

ACTION PLAN

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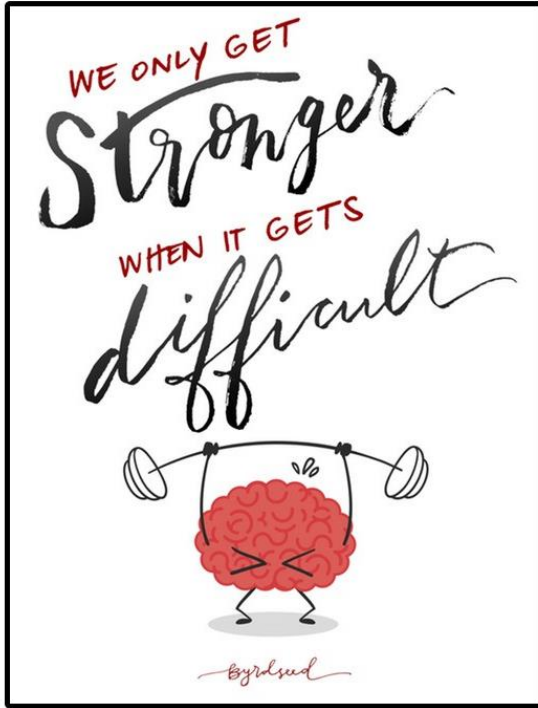
Build Up Grit & Growth Mindset

- ▶ Provide experiences with **genuine** challenge
 - ▶ Advanced school programs
 - ▶ Musical instruments, foreign language
 - ▶ Sports teams, individual sports
 - ▶ Martial arts, swimming, fencing, tennis...
 - ▶ Independent study projects, contests, olympiads
- ▶ Let kids struggle and fail (within reason)
- ▶ Notice and reinforce effort & progress
 - ▶ Be careful what you praise
- ▶ Discuss perfectionism openly
- ▶ Insist on persevering through challenge
 - ▶ Do not let kids give up
 - ▶ Not just academics – extracurriculars, sports...

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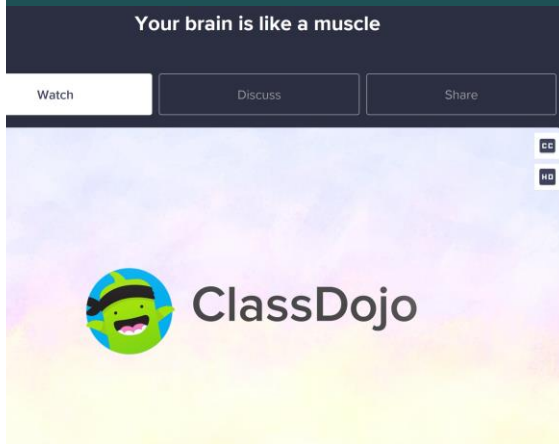
“The brain is like a muscle. It needs a workout to get stronger.”

Posters & Lesson Plans
byrdseed.com

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Teach kids explicitly about neuroplasticity (brain growth)

► ideas.classdojo.com



► MANY videos on YouTube

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“Equity” does not mean giving the same education to every kid

- ▶ Different kids are in different places
- ▶ Every kid should learn something new at school every day
 - ▶ Vygostky's Zone of Proximal Development
 - ▶ Not too easy, not too hard
- ▶ Not **MORE** work, **DIFFERENT** work
 - ▶ Not just more classwork on top of the “regular” stuff
 - ▶ Make sure the kid doesn't feel punished for being smart by giving them more work
 - ▶ Piles of homework is NOT the goal
 - ▶ Not a pressure cooker, just the right level to build grit

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Bottom line...

**Mismatch with
the environment**

Smart is NOT Easy
Emotionally – Socially – Academically
Grit – Executive Function

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Why do we serve gifted kids?

- ▶ They are a special needs population
- ▶ Without intervention they are at risk
- ▶ Nurturing the WHOLE CHILD
- ▶ GOAL: Functioning citizens in our community

- ▶ NOT:
 - ▶ To create eminent leaders (Einstein, Steve Jobs, ...)
 - ▶ To send more kids to Harvard, Stanford, MIT...
 - ▶ To nurture child prodigies
 - ▶ To increase our international math ranking
 - ▶ To improve the US economy

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Thank You

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