The Challenge and Promise of Creative Underachievers

By

Jennifer L. Groman, PhD

A Book Chapter submitted for consideration to

Fernanda Hellen Ribiero Piske

June 18, 2021

Word Count: 5,903 including references

Contact Information

Jennifer Groman, PhD

Assistant Professor	[Home address]
Talent Development Program	3232 Bayberry Cove
257 Dwight Schar College of Education	Wooster, OH 44691
Ashland University	Cell 419.651.2586
401 College Ave	
Ashland, OH 44805	

The creative child. What picture does this paint in your mind? What are their behaviors, reactions, interests, and personality characteristics? If you are a teacher, thoughts of a child like this may delight you and inspire you to find ways to integrate creative thinking and expression into your daily lessons. It is possible, though, that thoughts of a child like this puts fear into your teacher's heart. The creative child is quirky, a daydreamer, and asks questions that are either unanswerable or take the trajectory of a lesson into far reaching territories – far beyond the daily standard you are attempting to cover.

It is a fact: being creative increases a child's odds of dropping out of school (Kim & Hull, 2012). In their seminal work *Cradles of Eminence* (1962) Victor and Mildred Goertzel studied and reported trends in the childhood experiences of four hundred eminent individuals (hereafter called the Four Hundred), adding the biographies of three hundred more for the second edition (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004). In this text, there are section titles that reference the challenge in the childhoods of these eminent individuals. Chapter 10 is titled "Dislike of School and Schoolteachers," and other subheadings include "Children Who Were Thought to Be Dull or Who Were Academic Failures" and "Creative Children as School Problems" (p. iv).

The creative individual is fascinating and often mercurial. In this chapter I explore the challenges faced by creative children that may cause them to underachieve, and offer insights that might help educators improve the school experiences of creative underachievers. The chapter begins with definitions and characteristics of the creative underachieving child, and continues with various sections on the challenges of these types of children, including direct connections in the literature between creativity and underachievement, followed by a discussion of behavior issues related to creative underachievers, the sensitivities of creative and gifted students, and issues of nonconformity. The heart of this chapter is a section on the mismatch

between creative individuals and the school. The chapter concludes with suggestions and next steps for schools and teachers to ensure the promise of the creative underachiever.

Definitions

According to Dyrda (2000), students with Scholastic Underachievement Syndrome (SUS) simply cannot be classified into homogeneous groups, due to striking diversity and variability in their interests and behaviors. However, underachieving students are usually defined as above the 50th percentile in terms of IQ or cognitive ability and below the 50th percentile in achievement scores. (Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010). Torrance (1966) found that underachieving creatively gifted individuals tend to be in the superior IQ range (118-138), and mainly in the IQ range of 120's, rather than the very superior range (above 140) (Rimm, 1987).

For the purposes of this chapter a definition and explanation of *creativity*, especially as it relates to underachievement, is also necessary. The relationship between creativity and intelligence is often debated. Many researchers support the threshold theory, which states that high creative potential requires a threshold IQ level of above-average intelligence, or around 120. However, a meta-analysis by Kim (2008) indicates that the relationship between creativity and intelligence may be minor, and that "the threshold theory was not supported by quantitative synthesis" (Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010, p. 186), thus creativity and IQ may be perceived as independent constructs. Piirto (2004) asserts that creativity is not a separate or stand-alone thinking skill, but is domain specific.

Creativity in individuals, then, is defined here using a foundational notion that the individuals' ideas are 1) novel or new and 2) appropriate to the task (Amabile, 1996; Kaufman, 2009; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2012). Kaufman & Beghetto indicate that context is important to defining creativity, and they believe creativity is leveled thus:

Mini-c creativity can be seen in interpretations, actions, and insights (being new and task appropriate) that are novel for the individual and allow for personally meaningful connections to the world. Mini-c creativity elicits changes in understanding and impacts individuals.

Little-c or everyday creativity is creativity in a small context, and "enriches the human experience and is associated with many positive outcome variables" (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2012, p. 156). Little-c creativity impacts individuals and their zone of influence.

Pro-c level creativity is evident in expert level creators or teams of creators who have not yet attained eminence. Pro-c creativity impacts organizations, teams, and markets.

Big-C level creativity is for reserved for true immortals in their field, those who achieve eminence. This type of creativity impacts culture, society, and the world, and is beyond the reach of most people.

It is important to note that mini-c and little-c creativity are very relevant to school learning cultures. It is believed that the only way to reach Pro-c and Big-C level creativity is to experience mini-c and little-c creativity in childhood and beyond, and by empowering children to experience mini-c and little-c creativity prepares them for higher level creativity interactions later.

So, according to scholarly definitions, creative children are those who have new and novel ideas that are task-appropriate. Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, and Hansen (2004) see creative thinking as peaking in second grade, and believe high school to be a "particularly barren period for any expression of intellectual vigor or originality" (p. 278). They believe that college and adulthood is where individuals regain their motivation for learning for learning's sake, for intuition, and the seeking of beauty and truth.

Characteristics of the Creative Thinker

In an article that has spread through gifted educational circles for years, Szabos (1979) compares the characteristics of the high achiever, the gifted learner, and the creative thinker. This chart describes the creative thinker as a daydreamer who may appear off-task, an independent, original, unconventional child who is overflowing with ideas (many of which will remain undeveloped), an intuitive individual who makes mental leaps, a child who enjoys off-the-wall humor and is unmotivated by grades, and eschews repetition for the sake of mastery. Dyrda (2000) asserts that gifted students have a great deal of creative potential, and may appear nonconforming, divergent in their thought processes, and do not meet with approval from most traditional teachers. Kim and Hull (2012) observed in the creative child a lack of inhibitions associated with self-exploration and self-expression.

It might be hypothesized that gifted children who are creative would easily fit within traditional classrooms, be welcomed and supported, and find success therein. Yet Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, and Hansen (2004), in studying the lives of four hundred eminent creative individuals (the Four Hundred), found that despite their intelligence, creativity, and potential for future eminence, three of five of the Four Hundred had serious school problems. In researching for this chapter, I found overwhelming evidence that traditional teachers and schools prefer students who do not exhibit the characteristics and behaviors of creative thinking, as it works against the standardized, lock-step nature of the school culture. This environment can, over time, drive the creative child into rebellion, or into hiding their creative responses and ultimately, underachieve.

Reis and McCoach (2000) noted three individual characteristics of underachieving gifted students they saw as positive attributes. Underachieving gifted, in their viewpoint, have intense outside interests, are highly creative, and demonstrate honesty and integrity in rejecting

unchallenging coursework. Dyrda (2000) reports that underachieving students can be seen as falling into two groups. The first are students with recurrent or chronic incongruity between their potential and their scholastic achievement. The second group consists of students whose underachievement is situational and periodic, and usually in response to temporary circumstances or problems. "In the vast majority of cases the situational drops in achievement evolve with tie into chronic underachievement, making an expert and accurate diagnosis of the causes of this damaging phenomenon extremely important" (p. 130).

Creativity and Underachievement

I was surprised to find that there are many direct connections between achievement and creativity in the literature. Older research suggests that many gifted underachievers show potential for high levels of creativity (Whitmore, 1980). Reis and Renzulli (1982) and Torrance (1964) agree that creativity contributes to high achievement, even when paired with average or lower intelligence. According to Kim and VanTassel-Baska (2010), "both underachieving and overachieving students might have higher creative potential than other students (p. 190). Indeed, a number of researchers assert that gifted underachievement may be related to higher levels of creativity (Kim, 2008; Kim & Hull, 2012; Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010; Rimm, 1987). Kim and Hull (2012) even posit that "creativity can be a gift as well as a curse for some students in [the] traditional school environment, where it can lead to underachievement and even dropping out of school" (p. 174).

Kim and Hull (2012) examined creativity and its possible roles in high school dropouts, exploring the Taylor and Ellison (1983) estimation that each year 100,000 high school dropouts are creatively gifted students. Kim and Hull (2012) determined that the presence of certain creative personality attributes play a role in how students temper their interactions in the school

environment. "Some students may not fit well within the school system because of conflicts between their personalities and the school environment" (p. 173). These include "problems with authority, nonconformity, hostility, suspiciousness, oversensitivity, and egotism" (p. 169). Also, gifted dropouts show "negative and rebellious attitudes toward school and authority, poor peer relationship, and poor social adjustment" (p. 169), all of which relate to the presence of asynchrony, as well as a sense of resentment toward the school community due to a certain lack of support or intellectual challenge.

Behavior Challenges

Kim and VanTassel-Baska (2010) indicate that behavior problems in school are common for all types of children, and is not unique to underachieving students. However, Torrance (1981) recognized a relationship between behavior problems and creativity among underachievers. He expressed concern that teachers view creative students as difficult to manage, even punishing and discouraging creative behaviors. Thirty years later, Kim and VanTassel-Baska (2010) found that behavior problems in underachieving high school students were related to their creativity in that students with behavior problems scored higher on measures of creative potential. In another study, students rated by teachers as impulsive, disruptive, and hyperactive, scored higher on tests of creative fluency (Brandau, et al., 2007).

Teachers are often ill-prepared to work with gifted students, and as a result, misbehavior in these students may be seen as a response to repetitive and unchallenging tasks in the classroom (Kim, 2008; Torrance, 1962). In addition, avoiding unpleasant work and interactions with teachers (Kim, 2008), poor grades, missing assignments, general disorganization, mood swings, and intense emotions often plague the gifted underachiever (Rimm, 1987). These behaviors and teachers' dislike of them also mean that most gifted underachievers will not be

selected for special classes for intellectually gifted children (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004). Studious achievers attained the highest teacher grades among the three types of gifted high school students (social leaders, studious achievers, and creative intellectuals), while creative intellectuals attained the lowest (Drews, 1961).

Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, and Hansen (2004) noted that in the childhoods of their eminent Four Hundred, many of them engaged in activities that gained disapproval by their teachers. They explored ideas and manipulated materials, enjoyed fantasy, saw unusual uses for everyday objects, and had an energy that was misconstrued as playing rather than doing serious work tasks assigned by their teachers. Stone (1980) found that peer identified second grade students who misbehaved the most scored highest on tests of creativity. In my own student teaching days, some 30 plus years ago, the most creative child in the room, whose constant movement, questioning, and delight in the world around him (even, unfortunately, an intriguing fire alarm box), made him the center of attention in one of the most mortifying experiences of my early teaching career. My cooperating teacher stood him in the middle of the room and the entire class (save one intelligent and empathetic friend) issued complaint after complaint about his behavior as he bravely bore each one. As a preservice teacher, I learned how creative students who have not learned self-regulation can be treated in the classroom by students and teachers alike.

The intelligent and empathetic friend in this experience is also indicative of a characteristic that is often "undervalued and unnoticed when displayed by gifted children" (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004, p. 255), which is altruism and sympathy. Often sensitivity to injustices and unfairness and the subsequent feelings of guilt cause gifted children to be scorned or ridiculed by peers.

Sensitivity and Suppression

Kim (2008) found that when gifted students were included in programs that support and encourage creativity and giftedness, they "became highly creative" (p. 238). "If needs are not met, creative individuals may develop into underachievers (Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010, p. 85). Because creatively gifted students are apt to be kept out of gifted programming, however, they often learn to suppress their creative impulses. Peer pressures, too, can make creative children feel that their unique way of thinking and being makes them socially undesirable or weird. In the peer-oriented culture of U.S. schools, children can often be afraid to think until "they learn what their classmates are thinking" (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004, p. 278). Sensitive to negative feedback (Whitmore, 1980) or fear of being laughed at for unusual attempts and responses may make creative students withdraw into fantasy, a safe place perceived as much more rewarding and accepting (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004; Kim, 2008). They may also withdraw if things are not done their way (Rimm, 1987). Kim and Hull (2012) assert that highly creative students may "experience problems of adjustment" (p. 170) because creativity involves nonconformity, independent and innovative thinking. Torrance (1968) called highly creative children "creatively handicapped" because their creativity makes it difficult to achieve in the traditional classroom, even suggesting that a new category be added to special education for this unique group.

> An entirely different problem may manifest when highly creative children suppress their creativity and become overly conforming and obedient. They are likely to grow up with a lack of confidence in their own thinking and be overly dependent upon others in making decisions (Kim, 2008, p. 238).

To fully develop, all children need safe places to explore and practice their creative ideas without judgment or fear, the creative child especially.

The Challenge of Nonconformity

I work in the university setting, instructing teachers as they work toward an endorsement in the field of gifted education. Recently, as part of an assignment submission in the creativity course, a student commented

> My daughter sometimes gets the creativity "thorn" or itch. We can usually spot this when she gets antsy or has a hard time following directions. She needs a creative outlet. Sometimes this is in the form of making something, and sometimes it comes in the form of creative or imaginative play. (Jenkins, Personal Communication, May 21, 2021)

This comment put a face to – or rather, a wiggly body to – the concept of the *creative child.* There are many characteristics and behaviors of these types of children that make it difficult for them to find success in the traditional classroom.

The characteristic that revealed itself the most in the literature as a challenge to the creative child in school is behavioral manifestation of the conformity/nonconformity dichotomy. Highly creative students enjoy the risk of the unknown, and the underachieving creative child may "seem driven to be unique and determined to attract attention to that uniqueness" (Rimm, 1987, p. 4). In direct contrast to the wishes of most teachers, who prefer conforming, acquiescing students, creative students ask unusual questions, put forth innovative ideas, and prefer divergent thinking during traditional discussions and activities. Some creative children resist conformity of the traditional classroom by being rebellious or disruptive, or questioning the teacher indiscreetly (Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010). Peers also tend to demand conformity to gain acceptance. The constant push-pull of the creative child's wishes for self-expression and uniqueness against the

expectations of conformity creates deep unhappiness, which manifests itself in misbehavior and withdrawal. Cramond (1994) noted that teachers, because of their desire for conformity, may even misidentify the unconventional behavior usually associated with creative children as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In addition, Rimm (1987) found that some achieving elementary gifted children who are not challenged in the classroom may begin to voice complaints about boring work and teachers who do not like them. As a result, older students may develop oppositionality against conventional authority.

"Highly creative students exhibit characteristics that many teachers find undesirable in traditional school environments, (Kim, 2004, p. 234). Research into specific characteristics of creative children would indicate that teachers see these children in a negative light, as problem-causers who are impulsive, subject to emotional conflict, sensitive, pessimists, withdrawn, reluctant to take on challenges, troublemaker, non-risk takers, and rebellious. Hammer (1961) found that "highly creative adolescents exhibited deeper feelings, greater original responsiveness, and fuller range of emotional expression" (as cited in Kim, 2004, p. 237).

My own statewide research of the perception of teachers as to characteristics of creative children show that while teachers viewed the characteristics of creative children as positive, including originality and out of the box thinking, fluency, curiosity, humorous or witty, there were deeply negative characteristics including belligerence, lacking follow-up, acting the clown, not following directions, and being a troublemaker (Groman, 2019).

Mismatch Between the Creative Individual and School

"Gifted teachers, like gifted students, often have difficulties in the lock-step classroom" (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, and Hansen, 2004, p. 301). My dissertation research (Groman, 2015) explored the experiences of three teachers who had been or were currently working in

gifted education, and their processes of working through existential crises as a result of the challenges of classroom teaching. What I found was that often there was a mismatch between what creative, innovative teachers believe to be best for the classroom and their students, and what the educational establishment and administration wants them to do. Palmer called this "crossed purposes," (2007). They also felt as if they did not fit with some of their colleagues who embraced a more traditional teaching system. This mismatch became an underlying condition in their existential crisis.

This is important because the educational institution has remained the same for generations of students – the classroom set-up of desks and tables, the ringing bells signaling students moving in single file lines to separate and unrelated discipline-based classes. The pandemic of 2020-2021 forced public and private schools as well as institutions of higher learning to completely rethink their ways of interacting with and educating students. This shake-up of age-old ways of "doing school" could only happen in times like these.

There are many ways in which traditional schools are mismatched with gifted students, creatively gifted students, and creatively gifted underachieving gifted students. In some ways this mismatch can be seen as a cause of or exacerbating factor in the learning lives of these students. Kim (2008) states, "Creativity and intelligence are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, the cause of the underachievement of many gifted and talented students may be their creativity, which tends to clash with traditional school environments" (p. 234).

Highly creative students in these environments often resent constraining structures, excessive rules, and the pressure for conformity (Kim, 2008). This resentment, which can be rather flagrant, pits the student against the teacher – creating a learning environment where teachers are unknowingly or knowingly extinguishing creative behaviors (Westby & Dawson,

1995). And as stated earlier, many teachers are severely underqualified to work with gifted students. Hammerschmidt (2016) states that

> Indecisive and inconsistent training and/or a lack of training in giftedness and gifted education have been found to contribute to teachers' incorrect perceptions in the inclusive classroom. These erroneous perceptions often lead to the misidentification or misunderstanding of the gifted student, resulting in a disadvantage for teachers when they encounter students who do not fit the stereotypical or current established mode of giftedness (p 7).

Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, and Hansen (2004) mourn the dearth of gifted models and strategic, creative, and intelligent teaching approaches used by teachers to support gifted and talented children that reach only a small percentage of those children. For example, American author Mary Ellen Chase, was given a fifth-grade textbook on her first day in elementary school in the 1890's. While this will seem like a positive acceleration strategy in those times, regrettably, she had to continue to use that same book for the next seven school years.

In a classroom where the teacher does not understand the needs of the gifted and creative students, these students are usually not encouraged or given opportunities to be creative or express themselves, they do not feel as though they belong, and they are often at odds with teachers for failing to follow directions or turn in assignments on time, and for rejecting rote learning (Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010). This discord "may develop into mental and emotional issues with teachers, peers, and their own self-image" (Kim, 2004, p. 235).

Creative students are sometimes described by their teachers using the descriptor of "too much," for example, the child asks too many questions, they are too independent, too impulsive, or challenge the status quo too much (Kim, 2004; Westby & Dawson, 1995). This descriptor

translates into nonconformity – and school achievement is dependent on conformity (Rimm, 1987), and "creative young people are faced with paradoxical pressures – their internalized value system says to 'be creative,' [and] they translate that to mean 'don't conform.'" (p. 4). Creative individuals are often faced with balancing their own creative wishes with the school and society's pressures for conformity. Creative adults can handle these pressures, young children cannot (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004).

In addition, many researchers find that teachers state that they like creativity and creative students, but often do not understand what creativity is or looks like (Aljughaiman & Mowrer-Reynolds, 2005; Kaufmann & Beghetto, 2012). And while Kirschenbaum (1989) found that highly creative teachers tend to have overachieving creative students, he also determined that and less creative teachers tend to have underachieving creative students.

What Schools and Teachers Can Do

I am a teacher, and have been for over 30 years. It is somewhat painful to write this chapter that is so disparaging of my profession and fellow professionals, especially with the knowledge of my own educational experience as a child. I felt completely supported as a creative being, in my home life through private lessons, summer opportunities, free time to explore my neighborhood, books, etc, and my school life, where creativity in the content areas, music, theater and the arts were fully supported by my elementary, middle, and high school coursework and excellent instructors. It is apparent that my experience is not the norm. In addition, I hear teachers in my graduate courses describe overwhelming testing and standardization protocols, limiting, rote teaching requirements, and complain that they have little time to practice and support creative work – in the classroom, and in their own lives.

The promise of these bright and creative children and teachers often remain largely untapped. I fear that until our schools' foundational philosophy and culture moves away from lock-step instruction and standardization, only small changes at best can be made. There are supports that teachers can put into place in the meantime. The literature is teeming with suggestions and ideas to create welcoming environments for underachieving creative gifted students.

Delisle (2018) recommends dividing underachievers into two groups similar to those Dyrda (2000) suggests: *underachievers* and *non-producers*, and suggests different therapeutic approaches for each. The learning challenges and poor self-concepts of underachievers requires long term treatment through coordinated efforts of the school, the home, and a licensed counselor. On the other hand, *non-producers* are often non-producing as a choice or rebellion. Their self-concepts are usually strong and targeted intervention will usually improve or reverse their underachievement. Strategies for non-producers include giving them time and support to pursue topics of strong interest (Kim, 2004; Reis & Hebert, 1985). A less restrictive school setting was shown to minimize underachievement in creative children (Whitmore, 1980). School environments should stress independence, choice, self-monitoring and self-exploration, (Kim, 2004; Kim & Hull, 2012), avoid excessive competition between students, and encourage students to have pride in their own work without external rewards (Hennessy & Amabile, 1987). Members of the Four Hundred appreciated teachers who let them advance at their own pace and pursue independent explorations of areas of special interest (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004). Torrance (1981) determined that the best predictor of future achievement is passion – or falling in love with a subject. It is also important that teachers make a conscious

effort to create safe, nonthreatening environments to purse diverse creative ideas, alternate approaches to problems, and making mistakes in the learning process (Kim & Hull, 2012).

Many eminent creatives experienced a "Time Out" (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004), a period of time when their normal activities were suspended and they had time to read and study without restraint, meet new people, plan, and think. Time out periods included illness or broken bones, but also working or living abroad. Ten percent of the Four Hundred describe a time-out period impacting their development in a significant way.

While many creative underachievers find traditional schools and teachers less than inspiring, they do find solace in tutors and mentors. They respond warmly to adults who listen to them and appreciate their special interests (Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004; Kim & Hull, 2012; Rimm, 1987), these mentors can include grandparents, family friends, and private tutors. Librarians and peer groups of intellectuals also fulfil this need, as well as school special interest groups like the debate team, theater group, school paper, and the faculty advisors of these groups. "There is an acute need for direct and frequent communication with intelligent adults. When this need is met to a reasonable degree in school, school rebellion is much lessened" (Goerztel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004, p. 249).

Parents can prevent underachievement in their creative children by maintaining an allied front with one another and with the school. Parents who complain about teachers, lack of creativity in schools, or call out one family member as "the creative child" add to oppositional problems in their children (Rimm, 1987). "An early problem will be indicated if there is a different value placed on creativity by two parents" (p. 4).

Two longer term suggestions were promising: providing teachers with professional development in experiencing, recognizing, and supporting creativity in the classroom and in their

own lives and teaching children self-regulation in recognizing that there are times and places for creative responses. Researchers recommend creativity training for all teachers (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2012; Kim, 2008; Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010; Murphy, Jenkins-Friedman, & Tellefson, 1984; Piirto, 2004, 2011; Storm & Storm, 2002). "Training in creativity influences teacher attitudes toward highly creative gifted students" (Kim, 2008, p. 240) and, "more subtly, teachers who model creative thought and an acceptance of differences provide a framework for self-acceptance and, most likely, a classroom environment where students are more likely to value each other's differences (p. 240).

My own university work includes teaching a creativity course for teachers of the gifted. In a recent survey I distributed to program alumni, I found that creativity training can be extremely transformational personally and professionally for teachers (Groman, 2021). Personally, it opened them to their own creativity – not necessarily exploring creativity like painting or dance (though many continued their creative work after the course), but it allowed them to honor their own creativity, and as a result, they felt more able to see and honor the creativity of their students. Many stated that they value and understand creativity better in their students.

> "Another theme of interest is that teachers appear to recognize and appreciate students who challenge the status quo, who may not always respond to authority in a positive way, and those who daydream or are disorganized. This shows an intensified openness for the nontraditional and quirky student, and understanding of the student who may not always find acceptance in school." (Groman, 2021, p. 27)

Finally, an intriguing solution to the challenge of the creative child's nonconforming behavior in the traditional classroom is posited by Kaufman and Beghetto (2012). Torrance

(1962) believed that many creative children "bring upon themselves many of their woes. Obviously, one task of education is to aid such children to become less obnoxious without sacrificing their creativity" (as cited in Goertzel, Goertzel, Goertzel, & Hansen, 2004, p. 287). The goal of guidance, Torrance (1962) believed, is to promote a healthy balance of creativity, individuality, and conformity. Kaufman and Beghetto (2012) offer philosophical yet practical advice to help teachers work with students to achieve balance and context to when and how they are creative.

Kaufman and Beghetto (2012) recommend teachers instruct students in aspects of creative metacognition (CMC), to recognize the various levels of creativity (from mini-c creativity to Big-C creativity), and also to realize that creativity consists not only of novelty, but also of task appropriateness. Teachers can help children be more aware of the appropriateness of creative expression at any given time in the classroom.

> Increased awareness of the positive and negative consequences of creativity can help students decide whether to take the intellectual risks necessary to engage in and share their creative ideas, insights, and interpretations. Unless students understand both the potential benefits (e.g. developing new insights, procedures, outcomes) and potential costs (wasting one's time and effort, being laughed at, dismissed, ignored) they will not be in a position to determine whether the level of risk associated with creative expression is worth taking. (p. 161)

Armed with this knowledge and consistent teacher feedback on their creative strengths and limitations, children can become more self-regulated in identifying when, where, and in what ways to share their creative ideas. This type of self-regulation is a powerful tool for children throughout their school years and into adulthood.

The Promise of the Creative Underachiever

I invite you to take a moment to revisit the earlier picture in your mind of the creative child. How has it shifted? Perhaps a few nontraditional or even troublesome children come to your attention now, and you are considering them with a more open heart and mind. At the very least, it is my hope that the thought of the creative child does not strike fear into your teacher's heart.

The mismatch of the creative individual and our traditional educational system puts an entire population of innovative potential at risk. If the needs of creative students are not met, they may develop into underachievers (Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010). However, when creative students find themselves in an educational environment that meets their diverse needs, they can reach and exceed their potential (Whitmore, 1980). It is imperative that our educational culture respect a more balanced approach to standardized accountability and creative and innovative thinking. When our educational culture establishes places of learning that respect and honor originality and innovative thinking, it can recognize and realize the full promise of the creative individual.

References

Amabile, T. M. (1996). *Creativity in context: Update to "the Social Psychology of Creativity."* Westview Press.

Aljughaiman, A., & Mowrer-Reynolds, E. (2005). Teachers' Conceptions of Creativity and Creative Students. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 39, 17-34. DOI: 10.1002/j.2162-6057.2005.tb01247.x

Brandau, H., Daghofer, F., Hollerer, L., Kaschnitz, W., Kellner, K, Kitchmair, G., . . . Schlagbauer, A. (2007).The relationship between creativity, teacher ratings on behavior, age, and gender in pupils from seven to ten years. *Journal of Creative Behavior, 42*(2). 91-113. DOI: 10.1002/j.2162-6057.2007.tb01283.x

Cramond, B. (1974). Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and creativity: What is the connection? *Journal of Creative Behavior. 28*(3). 193-210. DOI: 10.1002/j.2162-6057.1994.tb01191.x

Delisle, J. (2018). *Doing poorly on purpose: Strategies to reverse underachievement and respect student dignity.* Free Spirit Publishing.

Drews, E. M. (1961). *Creative intellectual style in gifted adolescents.* Michigan State University.

Dyrda, B. (2000). The process of diagnosing the underachievement syndrome in gifted and creative children. *The New Educational Review 18*(2). 129-137.

Goertzel, V., Goertzel, M. G., Goertzel, T. G., & Hansen, A. M. W. (2004). *Cradles of eminence: Childhoods of more than 700 famous men and women* (2nd ed.). Great Potential Press.

Groman, J. L. (2015). *From calling to crisis: The growth process of teachers through crisis-like incidents.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Akron. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=akron1436525010

Groman, J. L. (2019, October 20-22). *The Creativity Project.* [Conference Presentation]. The Ohio Association for Gifted Children Fall, 2019, Conference, Columbus, OH, United States.

Groman, J. L. (2021). Considering the long-term transformative impact of creativity training on the work and lives of teachers. [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Doctoral Studies and Advanced Programs, Ashland University.

Hammer, E. F. (1961). Emotional instability and creativity. *Perceptual & Motor Skills, 12*. 90-20. DOI: 10.2466/pms.1961.12.1.102

Hammerschmidt, M. M. (2016). *Teacher perception regarding the teaching of gifted students in the traditional classroom setting.* [Doctoral dissertation, Texas Tech University]. Texas Tech University Libraries. https://ttu-ir.tdl.org/

Kaufman, J. C. & Beghetto, R. A. (2012). In praise of Clark Kent: Creative metacognition and the importance of teaching kids when (not) to be creative. *Roeper Review, 35*(3). 155-165. DOI: 10.1080/02783193.2013.799413

Kaufman, J. C. (2009). *Creativity 101.* Springer.

Kim, K. H. & Hull, M. F. (2012). Creative personality and anticreative environment for high school dropouts. *Creativity Research Journal, 24*(2-3), 169-176.

Kim, K. H. & VanTassel-Baska, J. (2010). The relationship between creativity and behavior problems among underachieving elementary and high school students. *Creativity Research Journal, 22*(2), 185-193. DOI: 10.1080/10400410802060232

Kim, K. H. (2008). Underachievement and creativity: Are gifted underachievers highly

    creative? *Creativity Research Journal, 20*(2). 234-242. DOI:

    10.1080/10400410802060232

 Kirschenbaum, R. J. (1989). *Understanding the creative activity of students*. Creative

    Learning Press.

Murphy, D., Jenkins-Friedman, R., & Tollefson, N. (1984). A new criterion for the 'ideal'

    child? *Gifted Child Quarterly, 28*(1), 31–36. DOI: 10.1177/001698628402800108

Palmer, P. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life.*

    John Wiley & Sons.

Piirto, J. (2004). *Understanding creativity*. Great Potential Press.

Piirto, J. (2011). *Creativity for 21st century skills.* Sense Publishers.

Reis, S. M. & McCoach, D. B. (2002). Underachievement in gifted and talented students with

    special needs. *Exceptionality, 10*(2). 113-125. DOI: 10.1207/S15327035EX1002_5

Reis, S. M., & Heʹbert, T. P. (1985). Creating practicing professionals in gifted programs:

    Encouraging students to become young historians. *Roeper Review, 8*(2), 101–104.

    DOI: 10.1080/02783198509552945

Reis, S. M., & Renzulli, J. S. (1982). A case for a broadened conception of giftedness. *Phi

    Delta Kappan, 63*(9). 619-620.

Rimm, S. (1987). Creative underachievers: Marching to the beat of a different drummer

Stone, B. G. (1980). Relationship between creativity and classroom behavior. *Psychology in

    the Schools. 17*(1)*. 106-108.*

Storm, R. D., & Storm, P. S. (2002). Changing the rules: Education for creative thinking. *Journal of Creative Behavior, 36*(3), 183–200. DOI: 0.1002/j.2162-6057.2002.tb01063.x

Szabos, J. (1989). Bright child, gifted learner. *Good Apple. 34. https://www.swasd.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Szabos_J_-_Bright_Child_Gifted_Learner.pdf*

Taylor, C. W., & Ellison, R. L. (1983). Searching for student talent resources relevant to our USDE types of giftedness. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 27*(3). 99-106. DOI: 10.1177/001698628302700301

Torrance, E. P. (1962). *Guiding creative talent.* Prentice-Hall.

Torrance, E. P. (1964). The Minnesota Studies of Creative Thinking: 1959–1962. In Taylor, C. W. (ed.), *Widening horizons in creativity.* (pp. 125–144). John Wiley and Sons.

Torrance, E. P. (1966). *Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking.* Scholastic Testing Services.

Torrance, E. P. (1968). Creativity and its educational implication for the gifted. *Gifted Child Today, 12*(2). 67-78. DOI:10.1177/001698626801200201

Torrance, E. P. (1981). *Thinking creatively in action and movement; Administration, scoring, and norms manual.* Scholastic Testing Services.

Westby, E. L. & Dawson, V. L. (1995). Creativity: Asset or burden in the classroom? *Creativity Research Journal, 8*(1). 1-10. DOI: 10.1207/s15326934crj0801_1

Whitmore, J. R. (1980). *Giftedness, conflict, and underachievement.* Allyn and Bacon.