



Ready, Set, Go

Success for All

An e-Newsletter linking people and resources to support quality practices in the education of all students



Educational practices developed during the pandemic emphasized the collective impact of social-emotional, physical, and cognitive health and exposed the absence of services accessible to high-achieving students (Pedrosa et. al., 2020). The stereotype of high-achieving students being immune to academic pressures is currently being challenged as patterns of perfectionism, anxiety, and rumination are increasingly associated with maladaptive behaviors and the decline of mental health and well-being (Oostadam, Koerhuis, & Fukink, 2019; Ramos et. al., 2021). Because these maladaptive signs are critical to educational practice, it is essential to understand what educational psychology is learning about maladaptive behaviors and what signs to look for when working with students who are high achievers.

Get **Ready**

Because related services for students that academically achieve at high levels are largely nonexistent, Get Ready to learn about how social neuroscience is reframing prominent theories of learning and the educational practices that impact high-achieving learners. Social neuroscience research has highlighted the connection between social connectedness and social, emotional, and cognitive well-being. Educational psychology has recently recognized the positive impacts of social, emotional, and cognitive wellness and has argued that greater emphasis on social wellness yields higher degrees of intrinsic motivation, content engagement, skill retention, and academic achievement. While this research has been conducted across a broad representation of learners, there remains substantial gaps for high-achieving learners, in part because data on academic achievement are often associated or coded as markers of wellness, which blinds educators to individual cases where high achievers are achieving academically but are consequently in social, emotional, or cognitive distress. Because high achievers and their mental wellness are uniquely situated in educational settings, it is important to take notice of the emerging recommendations. The U.S. Department of Education (2021) offers seven recommendations; two promoting differentiated support for all learners and implementing evidence-based prevention practices that match the empirical needs within the school community. Making room to talk about these recommendations is central to improving mental wellness in school. Still, it starts with awareness and creates spaces where students, teachers, and families can openly discuss social-emotional, physical, and cognitive distress.

Get Set to recognize the following characteristics of concern in students that academically achieve at a high level:

Social-emotional:

- constant need for reassurance
- overly sensitive to criticism from self and/or others
- rumination or tendency to focus on the negative leading to Imposter Syndrome
- fatigue resulting from over-extending themselves
- irritability, worry, drastic mood swings and/or tantrums
- lack of motivation

Physical:

- increased sensory-motor behaviors repetitive in nature
- headaches due to the cognitive strain necessary to focus
- avoiding eye-contact
- insomnia caused by either waking too early or going to bed too late
- vomiting and diarrhea
- racing heart, shaking, sweating
- avoidance of new or difficult situations
- commencing of substance use
- school refusal

Cognitive:

- over-analyzing situations
- difficulties with executive functioning skills
- perfection-fueled procrastination followed by long periods of focus for task completion
- hesitancy to ask for assistance with academic performance

Go to additional information/tools for addressing the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive health concerns of students that academically achieve at a high level:

- The most recent statistics related to stress and students: [50 Current Student Stress Statistics: 2023 Data, Analysis & Predictions](#)
- The use of universal screening to identify students experiencing such health concerns: [2023 Industry Report on K-12 Mental Health – Where Do We Go From Here? How K-12 Schools Can Support the Mental Health of Students and Educators](#)
- Strategies for supporting students that academically achieve at a high level but experiencing aforementioned concerns: [It's Official: High Achieving Students Designated "At Risk"](#)

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