

ACADEMIC UNDERACHIEVEMENT

Academic underachievement is a broad complaint and somewhat of an umbrella term that can have any number of underlying causes. The disorders that describe academic underachievement are based on the student's level of ability to function in cognitive, academic, or behavioral domains.

Complex and difficult to determine, here are some possible causes of underachievement:

- Feeling overwhelmed or incapable of doing well
- Being influenced by peers, relationship problems at school/or home
- Feeling picked on by teachers or that teachers don't like them
- Have a learning style that is not being accommodated in class
- Lacking the ability to discipline themselves to do the work
- Resisting parents' or teachers' authority
- Having been allowed too much independence at home or school
- Seeking more attention from parents or teachers
- Low teacher expectations
- Gaps in attendance, frequent moves, or inadequate prior instruction

LEARNING DISABILITIES

Students with learning disabilities usually start to present with an increasing history of prominent school failure, subtle delays in vocabulary and knowledge, or moderate inattention/ behavioral problems and then a general dislike of school.

Learning disabilities might appear in the form of a mathematics disorder or as a disorder of written expression or even reading. It is sometimes correlated with other deficits like attention problems and delayed verbal intelligence.

BEHAVIORAL

Students with significant cognitive impairment, behavioral deficits or psychological disorders often perform poorly in school as a result. Behavioral deficits including problems sitting, self-regulating, listening, being oppositional/defiant and general misbehavior often predict academic underachievement. There are psychological disorders, such as depression and anxiety, which can undermine motivation and performance thereby causing the student to underachieve.

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Why is a student an academic underachiever? It's important to note that academic underachievement can also be attributed to intelligent or gifted students, who do not perform as expected, either because they are bored or choose not to excel.

Whatever the cause, it's important to take note that the label of "Academic underachievement" can bring about side effects. If performance in school is deemed inadequate in a general way, what may happen is that students may begin to perceive themselves as inadequate in other kinds of learning experiences as well.

Common signs of academic underachievement in students:

- Lack of motivation growing disinterest in school
- Failure to complete or turn in homework
- A tendency to make excuses for school failure; refusal to accept blame or take responsibility for their own achievement
- Daydreaming or socializing too much, make school work the lowest priority
- Falling grades, and/or taking no satisfaction or pride in school work
- Believing they are already defeated, so why try?

PACIFIC QUEST CAN HELP

The path to adulthood can be elusive for some adolescents, having experienced guides and healthy mentors are particularly necessary for academic underachievers. Working with students to reverse an underachievement pattern requires a number of factors. It is important to identify the underachiever's areas of strength and talent. Personal interests can also motivate the student to learn and provide an avenue for learning various skills related to school success. Underachievers seem to respond well to people who have high expectations, provide calm and consistent guidance, and maintained a positive, objective regard for the student.

Individualized treatment plans are at the core of Pacific Quest's successful treatment process. With our small enrollment and specialized programming, we offer each student and family a chance to experience growth at Pacific Quest on a very personal level so that a variety of needs can be met.

Central to the therapeutic model are the experiential nature of the program and holistic approach to wellness. The program structure; intentional design of the phases; curriculum; daily activities; and focus on health and wellness, and peer culture complement the individual treatment plan providing the foundation for developing personal awareness and cultivating tools for personal development.

Unique to Pacific Quest, our Rites of Passage are woven into the curriculum throughout each student's experience, which are key to students developing a positive adult image. The experiences follow a consistent template found in Rites of Passage from around the world: Severance – letting go of the old that no longer serves; Threshold – engaging in a period of reflection, new learning, and new experiences; Incorporation – bringing back what one has learned into their life moving forward. Lastly, through horticulture therapy, the garden is one of many areas in the program that students learn to practice the skills to live a more independent and productive life. As students develop the courage, knowledge, and skills to care for a garden, they experience tangible success that builds greater confidence in themselves helping to create a positive self-image. They also realize their ability to internalize care for themselves, applying new skills and insights to aspects of their lives that reach far beyond a therapeutic garden in Hawaii.

Each aspect of Pacific Quest wilderness therapy is an essential ingredient in helping create a positive self-image and high self-esteem- that is central to aiding in any academic underachievement issues. There is no one thing that helps build positive self-image because it is the accumulation of many internal and external factors. The blend of therapeutics and experiential education lends itself to sustainable growth for the students allowing them the ability to apply healthy coping skills beyond the shores of the Hawaiian Islands.