REVERSING UNDERACHIEVEMENT AMONG
GIFTED SECONDARY STUDENTS

Beth Joelle Winton

Dr. Sarah Diem, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The lack of integration between the unique academic needs of gifted students and their public school experiences continues to be a source of concern among students, parents, teachers, and administrators nationwide. This lack of coordination leads some gifted students to fail to live up to their potential academically. In this mixed methods study, student data were analyzed and the School Attitude Assessment Survey – Revised was administered to determine whether there were patterns consistent among the group of underachieving gifted students that would assist the local school district in identifying them early in their public school career. Additionally, interviews were conducted with ten underachievers to determine their perspective of self and school. Utilizing the motivational aspects of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this study establishes the characteristics of school that enhance a student’s intrinsic motivation to learn. Recommendations for educational policy and leadership are provided as well as suggestions for future research.