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# 2

## PRAISE WORDS THAT YOU BELIEVE COULD BE MOTIVATING TO A CHILD WITHOUT CAUSING UNDUE PRESSURE

**CHILD #1**



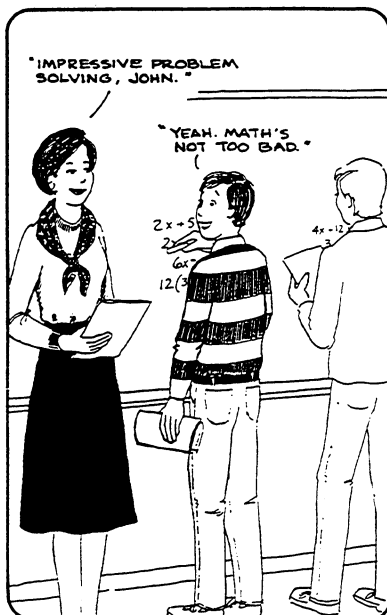
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**CHILD #2**

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## **OPTIONAL READING**



### **MARCHING TO THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUMMER**

Underachieving children are not always creative. Creative children do not always perform below their abilities in school. However, there seem to be alarming numbers of highly creative children who are not achieving well in school. Parents of these highly creative children frequently conclude with a certain amount of pride that "their child has *always* seemed to march to the beat of a different drummer."

Creative underachievers and creative achievers have been given early messages about the importance of creativity by at least one parent. It comes most simply by the praise given to children for their creative products and actions. They learn that when they do something unusual, or if they have a funny or different idea, it brings attention. Creative thinking becomes a personal motivational goal. That won't lead to underachievement if home and school environments cooperate to foster the creative process.

An early indicator of a potential problem will show itself in the differential valuing of the child's creativity by two parents. The child who identifies with the creative parent is likely to be creative; but if the other parent doesn't value creativity, the seeds of opposition and underachievement may be planted.

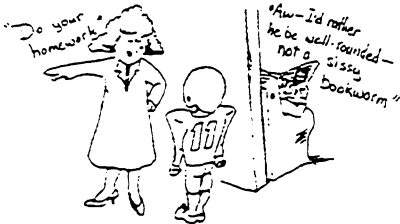
At elementary level these children may be seen as achievers, although the telltale signs of creative opposition are usually already visible. They often voice complaints about boring reading workbooks and teachers who don't like them. Parents may ally with them against the teacher, asking for less busywork or extending time deadlines for assignments. Parent conversations with other adults, which take place within children's hearing (referential speaking), include concerns about the lack of creativity in schools, the inadequacy of teachers, or the invidious comparison of routine schoolwork with the more creative out-of-school activities in sports, drama, or music.

As the parent sides with the child against the school, the child learns to avoid school responsibility and to blame the boring school curriculum for his/her problems. In the powerful alliance of child and parent, the child gains too much power and becomes engaged in a subtle struggle with his/her teacher in the name of creativity. Within this struggle are the seeds of the pattern of determined and oppositional nonconformity. The child has begun his/her march to the beat of an *ever* different drummer.

These creative young people are faced with paradoxical pressures. Their internalized value system says to be creative. They translate that to mean "don't ever conform." However, achievement requires some conformity. Peers are also demanding their conformity for acceptance. Conforming to friends seems antithetical to these youths' wishes to be creative. During the preadolescent years, creative underachievers are typically unhappy, often unappreciated by parents, teachers, and peers alike.

# RIMM'S LAWS

**1** Children are more likely to be achievers if their parents join together to give the same clear and positive message about school effort and expectations.



**2** Children can learn appropriate behaviors more easily if they have an effective model to imitate.



**3** Communication about a child between adults (referential speaking) within the child's hearing dramatically affects children's behaviors and self-perception.



**4** Overreaction by parents to children's successes and failures leads them to feel either intense pressure to succeed or despair and discouragement in dealing with failure.



**5** Children feel more tension when they are worrying about their work than when they are doing that work.



**6** Children develop self-confidence through struggle.

"I did well on that last report, and I worked hard on this one. I hope she grades them soon."

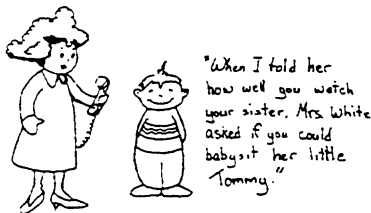


**7** Deprivation and excess frequently exhibit the same symptoms.

"You are so mean. Why can't I have a go-kart like all the other kids?"



**8** Children develop confidence and an internal sense of control if power is given to them in gradually increasing increments as they show maturity and responsibility.



**9** Children become oppositional if one adult allies with them against a parent or a teacher, making them more powerful than an adult.

"I know how it is. I've had some lousy teachers, too."



**10** Adults should avoid confrontations with children unless they are sure they can control the outcomes.



**11** Children will become achievers only if they learn to function in competition.



**12** Children will continue to achieve if they usually see the relationship between the learning process and its outcomes.



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