

# The Student Who Will Not Try The Student Who Does Just Enough to Get By

55

(*The Solution Book, Solution Sheets, Section 55*)

Description of the Problem	Cause
Lester is a bright, popular, pleasant fifth-grade student. His teacher knows that he could do superior work if he would apply himself. However, he always does just enough to get by. His last report card consisted of mostly Cs and a few Bs. Lester's teacher feels he could get straight As with relative ease. Lester is well liked by the other students and by the teacher. He just doesn't like to exert himself.	<p>Lester may be perfectly comfortable operating just the way he does. If he is confident, self-assured, and contented, it may not be desirable to view his behavior as a problem. However, the student may view himself as an average student and, therefore, operate as if he were average. If Lester does not believe he is capable of performing at a higher level, he will continue to produce average work even if he wishes to do better.</p> <p>NOTE: Determine whether a problem really exists. If the student is comfortable performing in the average range, check with the student's parents. If the parents also are comfortable with their child's performance, perhaps nothing needs to be done to change the student's performance. A problem only exists if the student wants to do better, but does not believe he or she is capable of doing better. If you find this to be the case with the student in question, then follow the steps that are outlined in this solution sheet.</p>

**The Goal** The student will develop more self-confidence and will begin to excel in some of his or her academic endeavors.

## The Plan

- Step 1** Increase your positive interactions with the student and begin to build up the student's self-image. Study booklet E, "Increasing Positive Interactions and Improving the Student's Self-Concept," for ideas on how to do this.
- Step 2** Choose a subject area to focus on. It should be a subject in which the student has already shown an ability to excel. Concentrate your efforts in this one academic area. Don't attempt to get outstanding performance from the student in all areas at once. Your initial goal is to have the student experience success and your efforts are better directed at one subject at a time.
- Step 3** Set specific goals and expectations for the student in the subject area identified in step 2. Try to make the expectations as detailed and specific as possible. For example, if the student's target area is math, he or she might work to improve the math score each day until he or she is consistently attaining a score of 90 percent or better. The student will need to know precisely what he or she must do to

Turn the page.

## The Plan (continued)

meet the goals and expectations you have set. Don't set unreasonable goals; the goals should progressively increase in difficulty. Set a small goal initially, and when that is achieved, set a goal that is slightly more difficult.

**Step 4** **Discuss the problem and the goals with the student.** Be honest with the student. Let the student know why you have set these goals. Tell the student that you think he or she can do better than in the past, and that you would like to prove it.

Don't give the student the impression that you are placing unreasonable pressure on him or her. Your discussion should show that you have more confidence in the student than the student does. Be encouraging and reassuring.

**Step 5** **When the student meets the expectations that have been set, provide reinforcement and praise.** Let the student know that you are aware of and pleased with his or her success and that the student should be, too. Hopefully, the student will realize his or her potential.

Initially, provide a special reinforcement of some sort. One powerful reinforcer is sending a note to the student's parents. If the parents show interest and approval in what the student is doing, the student is more likely to gain confidence and assurance in his or her abilities. Other reinforcers might include getting to show his or her work to the principal, getting to tutor another student, or getting to present a short lesson to the entire class. A "certificate of improvement" also frequently becomes an object of pride. The reinforcer should demonstrate that you have a tremendous amount of confidence in the student's ability.

**Step 6** **If the student doesn't meet a goal, calmly tell the student "That's okay—you'll make it tomorrow."** Do not scold or admonish the student. If too much attention is given to the student when he or she has not met a goal, it may serve to reinforce the student's idea that he or she cannot be successful.