

The Twice-Exceptional Learner

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A bad year, without bad people really,
no one to exactly blame, just a
sequence of events
a class that didn't belong to me,
and I not belonging to it
the round peg in the square whole [*sic*]...
as words sprang and papers vanished,
I became more and more confused
and most of all sad
and so the round peg,
found a round whole
and so the story ends,
at least it was without villains
—Shane Wilder (2E Student), 2004

first appeared in Kirk, Gallagher, and Coleman (2015)

Gifted children with disabilities continue to be ignored, programs for them are lacking, and their problems are compounded by sometimes severe social problems and rock-bottom feelings of self-worth and personal integrity.... It is indeed time to lift the mask.

- Gary Davis, Sylvia Rimm, and Del Siegle, gifted education experts

What does *twice exceptional (2e)* mean?

What does *gifted* mean?

What does *disability* mean?

“Keep showing them examples of your child’s ideas – remind teachers of gifts and emphasize that you are trying to help develop those, not ‘cure’ her disability.”

-Claire Hughes



Learners with gifts and talents and learners with disabilities are both **exceptional learners** under Kentucky law.

GIFTED

- General intellectual
- Specific Academic
 - Math
 - ELA
 - Science
 - Social Studies
- Creativity
- Leadership
- Visual and Performing Arts
 - Artist
 - Actor
 - Singer
 - Musician
 - Dancer

DISABILITY

- Specific Learning Disability (Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Auditory processing disorder, Nonverbal learning disability, etc.)
- Other Health Impairment (e.g. ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Emotional Disturbance
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Deafness
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- Orthopedic Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
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Each child's needs and strengths differ, so there is no one right way to identify and serve.

THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ALMOST ENDLESS!

Case Studies



Pedro



Hadley



Lance

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The National Twice-Exceptional Community of Practice (2e CoP)

Definition of Twice Exceptional Learners

Twice-exceptional individuals evidence exceptional ability and disability, which results in a unique set of circumstances. Their exceptional ability may dominate, hiding their disability; their disability may dominate, hiding their exceptional ability; each may mask the other so that neither is recognized or addressed.

2e students, who may perform below, at, or above grade level, require the following:

- Specialized methods of identification that consider the possible interaction of the exceptionalities,
- Enriched/advanced educational opportunities that develop the child's interests, gifts, and talents while also meeting the child's learning needs,
- Simultaneous supports that ensure the child's academic success and social-emotional well-being, such as accommodations, therapeutic interventions, and specialized instruction.

Working successfully with this unique population requires specialized academic training and ongoing professional development.

(Baldwin, Baum, Pereles, & Hughes, 2015, p. 212-213)

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Three Conditions of 2e

Exceptional Ability Recognized First	Disability Recognized First	Neither Recognized
Achievement or talent noticed early, often highly verbal	Often struggles in school	Disability masks gifts, gifts mask disability, appears to be average
Tries to compensate for learning issue	First noticed for what they cannot do	Function at grade level but well below potential, may excel in specific subject or area
Frequently passed over for special education support because they may be achieving at or near grade level	“At risk” because focus tends to be on deficits Basic skills emphasized over creative abilities	Gifts emerge in specific content areas or in particular learning environments where nontraditional methods are used
When struggling, often thought to be lazy, not trying, or underachieving	Difficulty giving themselves credit for abilities, refer to self as dumb or stupid	

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Team Task 1

- As a team, consider the three areas or conditions of 2e in relation to your case study.
- Which of these three conditions do you think applies to your case study?
- What makes you think this?

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Response to Intervention (RtI)

Assumes **failure** indicates possible issues; this is **not true** with gifted students. The gifted child's strengths could easily allow him to make passing grades – even though the achievement does not match his ability.

Pereles, D., Coleman, M. R., & Baldwin, L. (in press). Meeting the Needs of Students Who Are Twice-Exceptional. In J. Roberts, T. Inman, & J. Robins (Eds.) Introduction to Gifted Education. Waco, TX: Prufrock.

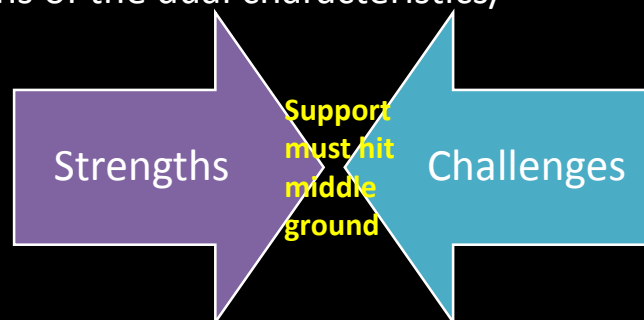
Since the reauthorization of the IDEA in 2004, 2e individuals have had a difficult time qualifying for Individual Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans to receive needed intervention and accommodation. In a letter to State Disability Directors dated April 17, 2015, USDOE Special Education Director Melody Musgrove stated:

. . . we continue to receive letters from those with children with disabilities with high cognition . . . expressing concern that some local education agencies (LEA) are hesitant to conduct initial evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services and related services for children with high cognition . . . remind each LEA of its obligation to evaluate all children, regardless of cognitive skills, suspected of having one of 13 disabilities . . . (OSEP Memo 15-08).

As cited in Amend, E., & Peters, D. (2015, October). The role of a clinical psychologist: Building a comprehensive understanding of 2e students. *Gifted Child Today* 38(4), 243-245. doi: 10.1177/10762175155597286.

Recognition and Identification

- Recognition of characteristics/behaviors
 - Strengths
 - Challenges
- Interactions of the dual characteristics/behaviors



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Comparisons of Characteristics of Gifted Students and Twice-Exceptional Students

Indicator	Recurrent behaviors and characteristics of gifted students	Possible behaviors and characteristics of 2e students
Learning	Possesses ability to learn basic skills quickly and easily and retain information with less repetition	Often struggles to learn basic skills; may demonstrate need for strategies in order to acquire basic skills and information
Verbal skills	Exhibits high verbal ability	May demonstrate high verbal ability but may also show extreme difficulty in written language area; may use language in inappropriate ways and at inappropriate times

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Select the comparison that most surprised you. Discuss in your group.

Looking over the comparisons, do any particular students come to mind?

My daughter is twice-exceptional – she is a gifted young lady with high-functioning autism. One of my greatest joys was having her giftedness be so significant that it helped her work around her autism. **Incredible mimicking skills = social success.**

-Claire Hughes, parent

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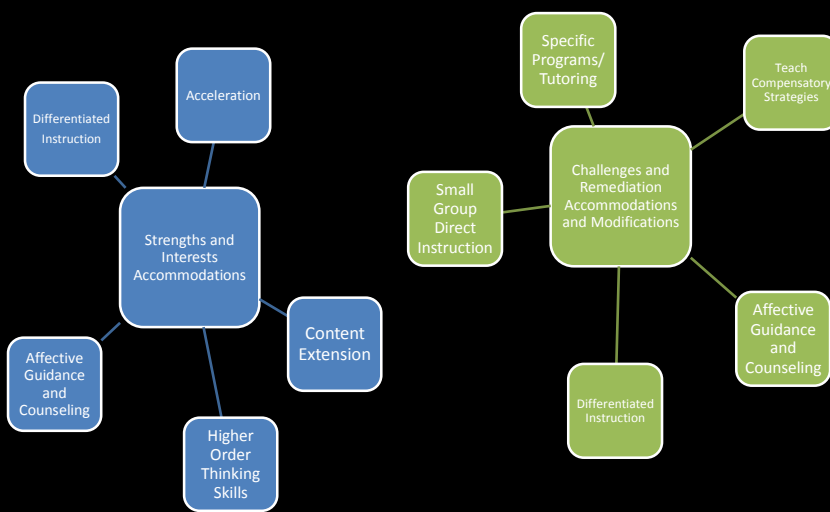
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What is our goal?



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Dual Differentiation in Programming



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“Nurture the student’s strengths and interests;
Foster her social/emotional development;
Enhance her capacity to cope with mixed
abilities; Identify learning gaps and provide
explicit, remediative instruction; Support the
development of compensatory strategies”

- Micaela Bracamonte, founder of 2e school

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Plan Development

- Comprehensive
- Individualized
- Flexible
- Whole Child Approach



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It Takes a Team!

- Special educators
- Gifted educators
- General educators
- Related service providers: (e.g., occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, physical therapists, and mental health providers)
- Counselors
- Parents, Guardians, and Family
- Student

Inman, T., & Kirchner, J. (2016) Parenting gifted children 101: An introduction to gifted kids and their needs. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Collaborating as partners in **examining data, developing and implementing interventions, monitoring progress, and evaluating effectiveness** are often new skills for all. The most important elements to achieve success are **clear communication, common language, and identified role expectations** (Lines, Miller, Arthur-Stanley, 2011). With this type of partnership, twice-exceptional students can feel more consistently supported in school and at home. Family and school personnel **share ownership** when they work closely together to create and modify a successful plan for a child.

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Twice-exceptional students are at increased risk for failure and underachievement without a partnership with families (Reis & Neu, 1995).



Santa Barbara Catholic School

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

- Supportive **infrastructure** providing personnel preparation, policies that facilitate cooperation, and time for coordinated planning and interventions
- Encourages utilizing a **tiered approach for support** offered to all students, especially those with diverse educational needs (e.g., increasing levels of duration and intensity)
- Problem-solving process allowing for discussion of the whole child, **starting with strengths**
- Multi-tiered system allowing for **ongoing discussion** about each student's needs without a push to get the child tested for special education (i.e., interventions can occur without a label) (Pereles, Baldwin, Omdal, 2011)

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Considerations for Effective Plan

- Characteristics
- Strengths and interests
- Learning needs
- Social and emotional needs

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Characteristics

- Go back to Comparisons handout



Strategies: Strengths and Interests

- Student, parent, teacher interviews
- Observational data
- Student interest surveys
 - Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (Renzulli et al., 2010)
 - Learning, creativity, motivation, leadership, content area, the arts, communication, planning
 - Interest-A-Lyzer Family of Instruments (Renzulli, 1997)
- Fill in gaps not addressed by more formalized assessments

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Strategies: Learning Needs

- Review cumulative records
 - Look for changes in performance
 - Observations from teachers
 - Health history
- Gather information from all teachers regarding academic performance and perceived discrepancies

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Strategies: Social and Emotional Needs

- Academic self-concept
- Levels of anxiety
- Anger issues
- Considerations of necessary environmental supports
- Creating a safe environment

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Team Task 2

- Individually read the *Questions to Help Determine Need* handout with your case study in mind.
- Answer the following questions as a team.

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- Are there any questions you want to add?
- Are there any questions you would not want to use?
- Are there any questions that need modification in your specific case?
- What questions might you ask the student that would be developmentally appropriate so that they could actively participate in their own plan development?

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Team Task 3

- Using the modified *Questions* handout that focuses on strengths and interests, create a list of strengths and interests for your case study.
- Using the modified *Questions* handout that focuses on challenges or learning needs, create a list of challenges for your case study.
- Consider possible interactions between ability and challenges that may be evident in your case study. Use the *Characteristics* handout.

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Team Task 4

- As a team, determine at least three suggestions for a plan for each of these areas:
 - Strengths and Interests
 - Learning Needs
 - Social and Emotional Needs
- Report to the entire group

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A very special thanks goes to Daphne Pereles for the case studies and slides pertaining to the case studies.

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This presentation stems from the article:

Baldwin, L., Omdal, S. N., & Pereles, D. (2015). Beyond stereotypes: Understanding, recognizing, and working with twice-exceptional learners. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 47, 216-225.

One million of our nation's most promising, most innovative thinkers—bright children who learn *differently*, not *deficiently* – constitute a neglected national resource. Twice-exceptional children need an education that fits, and it's in all of our interests to give it to them.

- Micaela Bracamonte, parent and administrator

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Thank you for your time and
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