

INCLUDES DIGITAL
CONTENT LINK

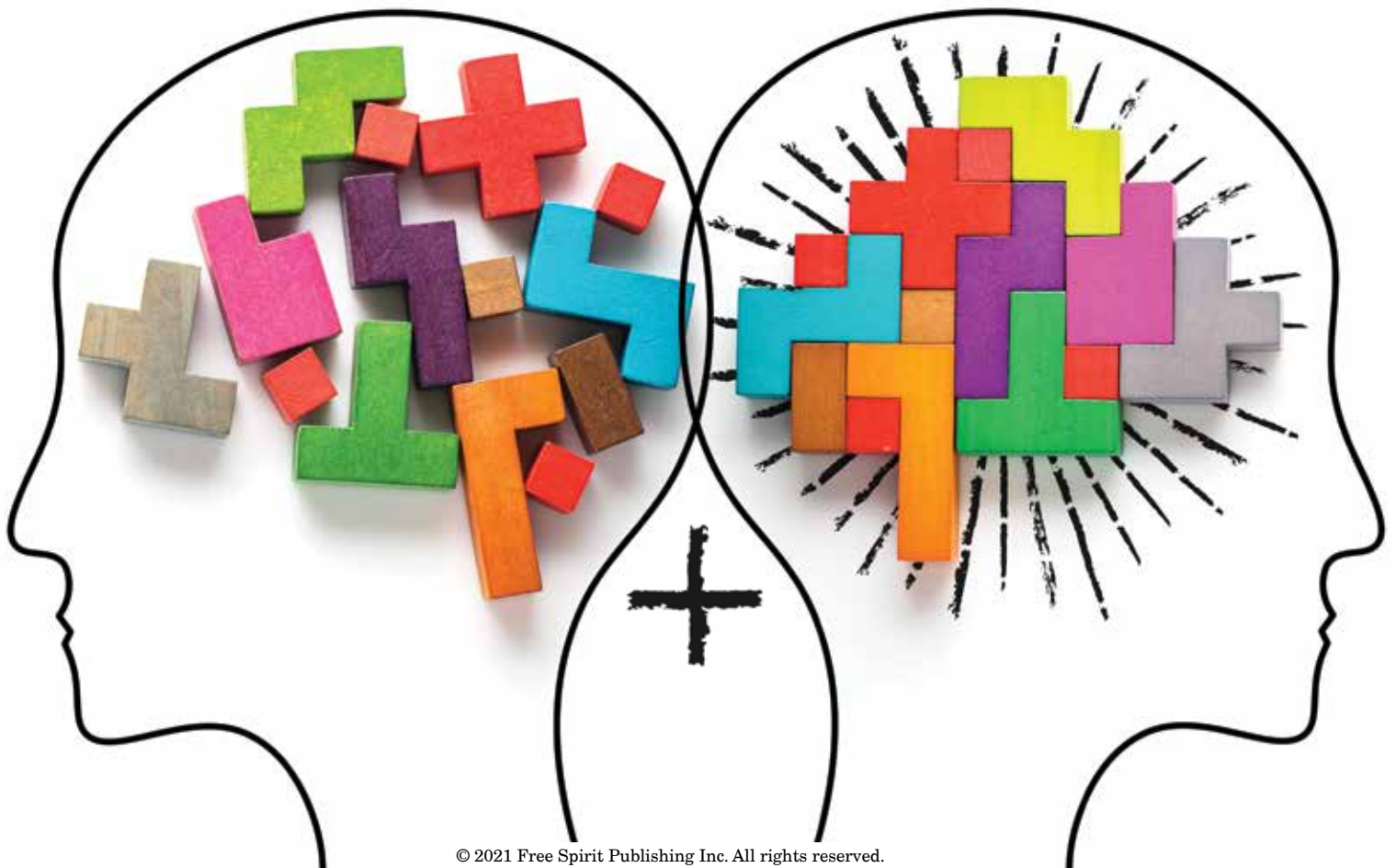


TEACHING

Twice-Exceptional

LEARNERS

in Today's
Classroom



© 2021 Free Spirit Publishing Inc. All rights reserved.

TEACHING TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS IN TODAY'S CLASSROOM

“Emily Kircher-Morris has provided an exemplary resource for educators that clarifies who 2e learners are and how best to meet their instructional and support needs. Practitioners, college students, and researchers will appreciate the practical, research-based information provided in this text. Most impressive are the tools for educators and the student vignettes that appear throughout the book that bring the world of diverse 2e students to life. I highly recommend this text to educators and advocates of twice-exceptional, gifted, and other cognitively diverse students. Well done!”

—**Joy Lawson Davis, Ed.D.**, award-winning author, expert scholar in diversity and equity in gifted and advanced learner programs

“*Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom* is going on my list of recommended reads for all teachers. It’s loaded with practical, actionable advice that can be used by educators and parents trying to navigate the often-troubled terrain of educating a twice-exceptional child. The tables, charts, and case studies make it an engaging read, and it covers so many possible scenarios that it will have broad appeal to those in the field. I found myself nodding in agreement many times, and readers will love the respect and feeling of camaraderie that shines through every page.”

—**Lisa Van Gemert, M.Ed.T.**, founder, Gifted Guru

“*Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classrooms* is a comprehensive and user-friendly guide to understanding, supporting, educating, and serving twice-exceptional students not only in the classroom, but also in life. Emily Kircher-Morris has combined her decades of teaching and counseling with her own invaluable life experience to provide a road map for understanding the complexities of twice-exceptional profiles and how they show up in classrooms. This book is filled with strategies for capitalizing on strengths while improving the motivation, organization, and engagement of twice-exceptional learners. We will be recommending this guide to all of our clients.”

—**Dan Peters, Ph.D.**, licensed psychologist, co-founder and executive director, Summit Center

“Every teacher of the gifted needs this book! Emily Kircher-Morris has done a fantastic job of combining research and practice to provide doable supports for twice-exceptional learners. Her strength-based approach puts the learner first by getting them involved in the process. She masterfully covers the whole child from understanding the diagnosis to supporting them socially and emotionally. You are sure to find practical tools and strategies mapped out in all the chapters. She includes templates, methods, and techniques to ensure our 2e students find success.”

—**Richard M. Cash, Ed.D.**, educator of the gifted, author, and consultant, nRich Educational Consulting, Inc.

“Emily Kircher-Morris draws from both experience and research in putting together this strikingly practical toolkit. Packed with case examples, information, and strategies to support the many types of 2e learners, this book is a great addition to any parent or educator’s library.”

—**Edward R. Amend, Psy.D.**, clinical psychologist, The Amend Group, Lexington, KY

“*Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom* is a book that every educator needs, whether they teach special education or general education. It not only offers a structured, insightful look into learners who are so often overlooked, but also practical tools and actionable advice alongside compelling stories of and from twice-exceptional students. These stories, along with Kircher-Morris’ professional and personal understanding of the topic, bring the subject to life in a compassionate and relatable way. As a 2e learner myself who was never identified as a child, I was brought to tears by seeing myself reflected in the pages—and knowing that educators now have a resource to understand and support students like me.”

—**Amanda Morin**, Associate Director of Thought Leadership & Expertise, Understood, and author of *The Everything Parent’s Guide to Special Education*

“Emily Kircher-Morris has crafted an invaluable resource, full of insights, strategies, tools, and resources that will guide every 2e advocate in supporting our twice-exceptional learners. Her poignant student stories remind us to look beneath their ‘masks of disability’ and ‘masks of giftedness’ in order to recognize and serve their unique needs—both academic and social-emotional. I just wish this practical guidebook had been available when I was coordinating gifted education, because it goes a long way toward normalizing neurodiversity. And all of us can benefit from her words of wisdom: ‘Try. Tweak. Transform.’”

—**Deb Douglas, M.S.**, director, GT Carpe Diem Consulting, and author of *The Power of Self-Advocacy for Gifted Learners* and coeditor of *Empowering Underrepresented Gifted Students*

“*Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom* is a must-have resource for parents and educators. Filled with both information about twice-exceptional students and strategies to address multiple exceptionalities, this resource provides educators with specific ways to support diverse learners immediately. Armed with this resource, educators will be in a much better position to meet the needs of all gifted children, from academic to social-emotional needs and beyond.”

—**Christine Fonseca**, licensed educational psychologist, consultant, and author of *Emotional Intensity in Gifted Students*

“As someone who received a formal diagnosis of ADHD at thirty-seven years old, thirty years after being identified as a gifted and talented student in Brooklyn, NY, I am deeply grateful for Emily’s efforts to shine a light on how to serve students like me who think a bit differently. By focusing on ‘progress, not perfection,’ she has created a practical, yet powerful way to bring new partners into this mission and push the rest of us to deepen our understanding of the challenges and benefits of twice-exceptionality and to recognize the boundless untapped potential in students who are told they are defective because their brilliance diverges from the norm.”

—**Colin Seale**, Founder and CEO of thinkLaw and author of *Thinking Like a Lawyer: A Framework for Teaching Critical Thinking to All Students*

TEACHING

Twice-Exceptional

LEARNERS

in Today's
Classroom

Emily Kircher-Morris, M.A., M.Ed., LPC

free spirit
PUBLISHING®



Copyright © 2021 Emily Kircher-Morris

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Unless otherwise noted, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without express written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations or critical reviews. For more information, go to freespirit.com/permissions.

Free Spirit, Free Spirit Publishing, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Free Spirit Publishing Inc. A complete listing of our logos and trademarks is available at freespirit.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kircher-Morris, Emily, author.

Title: Teaching twice-exceptional learners in today's classroom / Emily Kircher-Morris.

Description: Minneapolis : Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 2021. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020008208 (print) | LCCN 2020008209 (ebook) | ISBN 9781631984853 (paperback)

| ISBN 9781631984860 (pdf) | ISBN 9781631984877 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Gifted children—Education. | Children with mental disabilities—Education.

Classification: LCC LC3993 .K575 2021 (print) | LCC LC3993 (ebook) | DDC 371.95—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020008208>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020008209>

Free Spirit Publishing does not have control over or assume responsibility for author or third-party websites and their content. At the time of this book's publication, all facts and figures cited within are the most current available. All telephone numbers, addresses, and website URLs are accurate and active; all publications, organizations, websites, and other resources exist as described in this book; and all have been verified as of December 2020. If you find an error or believe that a resource listed here is not as described, please contact Free Spirit Publishing.

Permission is granted to reproduce the pages included in the List of Reproducible Pages (page xi) or in the digital content that goes with this book for individual, classroom, and small group use only. Other photocopying or reproduction of these materials is strictly forbidden. For licensing and permissions information, contact the publisher.

Edited by Christine Zuchora-Walske

Cover and interior design by Emily Dyer

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America

Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

6325 Sandburg Road, Suite 100

Minneapolis, MN 55427-3674

(612) 338-2068

help4kids@freespirit.com

freespirit.com

Free Spirit offers competitive pricing.

Contact edsales@freespirit.com for pricing information on multiple quantity purchases.

DEDICATION

For Dave.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to thank for their support over the years that has culminated in this book.

The journey to write this book began while I was in elementary school and my mom, Pauline Gouvin, was by my side through it all—advocating for me, encouraging me, and helping me find my homework.

My dad, Allen Kircher, showed me—among many other things—the benefit of keeping a “warehouse full of useless information” in one’s brain.

Several teachers understood me—a quirky, impulsive, socially awkward kid—and never shamed me for being myself, especially Tracy Frauen, Linda Brakensiek, Nancy Black, John Guittar, Mike Hartman, and Mary Gismegian.

The Free Spirit Publishing team, including Judy Galbraith, Kyra Ostendorf, Meg Bratsch, Christine Zuchora-Walske, Amanda Shofner, and the rest of the behind-the-scenes crew guided me through this process and patiently answered all of my questions.

Jocelyn Murphy offered her support and assistance with some early stages of this project.

My colleagues at Unlimited Potential Counseling and Education Center have been integral to helping the practice grow and fulfilling our vision of supporting neurodivergent kids and their families, and the board of directors and staff for the Gifted Support Network, who tirelessly advocate for the gifted and twice-exceptional kids in our area.

My amazing clients and their families give me the chance every day to join them on their journey. I’m honored to be a part of their story and have them as part of mine. This book wouldn’t exist without them.

My own 2e kids, Grayson, Maggie, and Trevor, who bring more joy to my life than I’d ever thought possible and let me learn through firsthand experience what the parents of my clients are going through.

My husband, Dave Morris, constantly pushes me beyond my comfort zone and provides unending encouragement and support. He is the backbone of our family and my best friend. I love you, Dave.

Contents

List of Figures	ix
Digital Content	x
List of Reproducible Pages	x
Foreword by Jim Delisle.....	xi
Introduction	1
Why I Wrote This Book.....	2
Progress, Not Perfection	3
About This Book.....	4
How to Use This Book.....	6

PART 1

Supporting All Twice-Exceptional Learners 7

Chapter 1 Understanding Twice-Exceptional Learners	8
Recognizing 2e Learners	10
Underserved 2e Learners	13
Services and Accommodations for 2e Learners.....	16
Key Points.....	27
Chapter 2 Designing Strength-Based Instruction for Twice-Exceptional Learners	34
Meeting the Gifted Needs of the 2e Learner	34
The Basics of Differentiation for 2e Students.....	36
Strength-Based Instruction for 2e Learners	37
Addressing Areas of Difficulty.....	47
Strength-Based Lesson Planning	49
Key Points.....	51
Chapter 3 Social and Emotional Needs of Twice-Exceptional Learners	53
The Self-Concept of 2e Learners	53
Disclosing Diagnosis to Students.....	56
Perfectionism	60
Accommodating or Enabling?	65
Key Points.....	67

Chapter 4 Motivating Twice-Exceptional Learners	73
What Is Motivation?.....	74
Theories of Motivation.....	75
Self-Actualization and Motivation.....	85
Praise, Rewards, and Punishments	87
What’s My Motivation?	90
Key Points.....	90
Chapter 5 Goal-Setting for Twice-Exceptional Learners	99
Effective IEP Goals for 2e Learners	100
Student-Led Microgoals	101
Key Points.....	110
Chapter 6 Executive Functioning	112
Executive Function Skills	113
Coaching Students with Executive Functioning Struggles.....	115
Goal-Setting to Build Executive Function Skills	117
Key Points.....	119

PART 2
Interventions for Twice-Exceptional Learners 127

Chapter 7 Academic Diagnoses: Specific Learning Disabilities.....	128
Identifying Gifted Students with Specific Learning Disabilities	128
Implementing Special Education Services	135
Specific Learning Disability in Reading.....	136
Specific Learning Disability in Writing.....	141
Specific Learning Disability in Math.....	143
Social and Emotional Needs of GLD Students.....	144
Key Points.....	145
Chapter 8 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	147
What Is ADHD?.....	147
Identifying Students with ADHD.....	148
Reframing ADHD as a Strength	150
Social and Emotional Considerations for Gifted Students with ADHD	150
Accommodations and Modifications for Gifted Students with ADHD	154
Key Points.....	157

Chapter 9 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	160
Identifying ASD in Gifted Learners.....	160
Understanding Common Struggles for Autistic Gifted Students.....	166
Social and Emotional Considerations for Autistic Gifted Learners	171
Key Points.....	174
Chapter 10 Processing Difficulties	182
Central Auditory Processing Disorder.....	182
Visual Processing Disorder.....	184
Sensory Processing Disorder	186
Impact of Processing Difficulties on Gifted Learners.....	188
Key Points.....	189
Chapter 11 Anxiety and Related Disorders	191
Emotional and Behavioral Diagnoses	191
Anxiety-Based Diagnoses.....	192
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	193
Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia).....	195
Other Anxiety-Based Disorders	197
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.....	199
Social and Emotional Considerations for Gifted Students with Anxiety Disorders.....	200
Key Points.....	204
Chapter 12 Depression and Other Mood Disorders	207
Major Depressive Disorder	208
Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder and Bipolar Disorder	211
Social and Emotional Considerations for Gifted Students with Mood Disorders	212
Key Points.....	216
Chapter 13 The Neurodiverse Classroom	219
Normalizing Neurodiversity	219
Teaching Students About Neurodiversity.....	220
Self-Advocacy for 2e Learners	220
Your Classroom Isn't an Island	221
Try. Tweak. Transform.....	222
References and Resources.....	223
Index.....	228
About the Author	235

List of Figures

Figure 1-1	Who Should Gifted Programs Serve?.....	9
Figure 1-2	2e Commonalities.....	12
Figure 1-3	IEP Versus 504.....	17
Figure 1-4	Sample Paired Student Data Observation.....	21
Figure 1-5	Accommodation Types and Modification Examples.....	26
Figure 2-1	Enrichment, Acceleration, and Placement Options for 2e Learners.....	34
Figure 2-2	Examples of Upward Differentiation.....	37
Figure 2-3	Mind Mapping.....	43
Figure 2-4	Remedial and Supportive Service Options for 2e Learners.....	47
Figure 2-5	Sample Strength-Based Lesson Planning Templates.....	50
Figure 3-1	Validating Student Emotions.....	56
Figure 3-2	Fear of Failure Versus Fear of Success.....	64
Figure 3-3	Development of Learned Helplessness.....	66
Figure 4-1	Renzulli’s Three-Ring Model of Giftedness.....	74
Figure 4-2	Theories of Motivation.....	76
Figure 4-3	Performance Versus Mastery Goals.....	76
Figure 4-4	Internal Versus External Attribution.....	78
Figure 4-5	Extrinsic to Intrinsic Motivation Continuum.....	80
Figure 4-6	Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Self-Determination Theory.....	86
Figure 5-1	Hierarchy of Goals.....	102
Figure 5-2	The Metacognitive Cycle.....	103
Figure 5-3	My Microgoal Sample.....	107
Figure 6-1	Executive Function Skills.....	113
Figure 6-2	Sample Self-Monitoring Strategies to Build Executive Function Skills.....	117
Figure 6-3	Sample Goal Tracking Sheet for Emotional Self-Regulation.....	118
Figure 6-4	Sample Goal Tracking Sheet for Response Inhibition.....	118
Figure 6-5	Sample Goal Tracking Sheet for Task Initiation.....	118
Figure 7-1	Distribution of Cognitive Ability Scores.....	131
Figure 7-2	Sample Learning Profiles for SLD Identification.....	132
Figure 7-3	Montgomery County Public Schools GLD Identification Mode.....	133
Figure 7-4	Sample Screening and Evaluation Process for Identifying GLD Students.....	135
Figure 7-5	Phonetic Spelling of <i>School</i>	141
Figure 8-1	Handling Emotional Impulsiveness in School.....	153
Figure 10-1	VPD or Dyslexia?.....	185
Figure 12-1	Reframing Statements.....	213

Digital Content

See page 235 for instructions for downloading digital versions of these forms.

List of Reproducible Pages

Checklist for Recognizing Twice-Exceptional Children	28
Paired Student Data Observation	32
Accommodations Needs Screener	33
Strength-Based Lesson Planning Template	52
Asking for Help (Grades 4 and Up)	68
Asking for Help (Grades K to 3)	71
Types of Motivation (Grades 5 and Up)	92
Types of Motivation (Grades 1 to 4)	93
Motivation Scenarios (Grades 5 and Up)	94
Motivation Scenarios (Grades 1 to 4)	95
Motivation Evaluation (Grades 5 and Up)	97
Motivation Evaluation (Grades 1 to 4)	98
My Microgoal	111
Accommodations and Modifications for Executive Dysfunction	120
Executive Functioning Self-Assessment Tool (Grades 4 and Up)	122
Executive Functioning Self-Assessment Tool (Grades 1 to 3)	124
Accommodations and Modifications for Specific Learning Disabilities	146
Gifted, 2e, or ADHD?	158
Accommodations and Modifications for ADHD	159
Gifted, 2e, or ASD?	175
Accommodations and Modifications for ASD	177
Emotion Wheel (All Ages)	178
Improvisation and Role Play (Grades 2 and Up)	179
Two Truths (Grades 4 to 8)	180
What Are They Thinking? (Grades 1 to 3)	181
Accommodations and Modifications for Auditory, Visual, and Sensory Processing Disorders	190
Gifted, 2e, or Anxiety?	205
Accommodations and Modifications for Gifted Students with Anxiety	206
Gifted, 2e, or Mood Disorder?	217
Accommodations and Modifications for Gifted Students with Mood Disorders	218



Foreword

by Jim Delisle, Ph.D.

Distinguished Professor of Education Emeritus, Kent State University

How many times in your life have you said something like this? “If I knew *then* what I know *now*, I would have been a more effective teacher (or counselor, parent, or coach).” We can’t travel back in time to erase our mistakes or repair any unintended damage we caused while we were learning the ropes. But we can take comfort in knowing that the twice-exceptional (2e) kids and adults we meet along life’s path now will be better served, thanks to the wisdom and guidance offered by Emily Kircher-Morris in her groundbreaking book *Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom*. Indeed, this is a resource that is as useful for veteran educators like me as it is for anyone just starting out in a helping profession like teaching or counseling.

What I found most impressive about this book is the vast set of experiences the author brings into her writing. As Kircher-Morris explains and addresses a cascade of possible 2e conditions—including autism, ADHD, anxiety, depression, dyslexia, and more—she weaves a tapestry of powerful and respectful suggestions for both identifying these exceptionalities and addressing them in a classroom setting. Her frequent use of scenarios involving actual students or clients she has served brings into clear focus what it is like for gifted neurodiverse children and teens. As I read these vignettes, they reminded me of kids I’ve taught or counseled in my decades of work with gifted students, both neurodiverse and neurotypical. Kircher-Morris has done 2e kids, their parents, and their teachers a great service by so carefully explaining how to help them and by never forgetting that the most effective interventions begin with building a relationship based on mutual trust and respect.

In books like this, it is easy for authors to get so far into the weeds and the jargon that they lose focus on the child. That does not occur in *Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom*. Kircher-Morris writes from a vantage point of practicality and experience. Here are just a few nuggets of wisdom she offers:

- When neurodiverse gifted students achieve at or near grade level, that is not good enough.
- Perfectionism is the denial of any vulnerability.
- Autistic students cannot be bribed out of their neurological wiring.
- If you try to convince students to set goals you think are important without their buy-in, you take away their autonomy.

- A gifted child with a learning disability is a student in the deep end of the pool who doesn't know how to swim.
- It's easier to fight the monster under your bed when you turn on the light.

Some of these ideas are direct quotes from the book, while others are distillations of the author's thoughts, but each of these gems—and there are many more in the book—leave the reader with a fuller understanding of and appreciation for 2e kids and those who care about them. Kircher-Morris provides hundreds of specific suggestions for making the lives of gifted neurodiverse kids more complete and satisfying. You will return to this book so often that its pages will get dog-eared and wrinkled from use, which is the sign of a very worthwhile resource.

Now . . . if only I'd had this book four decades ago.

Introduction

When I was an elementary student in the 1980s, my mother and my teacher saw two different kids. My mother, a special educator, noticed characteristics of giftedness. My teachers saw a disorganized and impulsive child with poor grades. My first-grade teacher noted that my work was always correct, but we had to dump out my desk to find it. By the time I was in third grade, my teachers routinely kept me in from recess because my work was incomplete.

At the end of second grade my mom insisted on testing, and I began participating in the district's gifted education program the next fall. Third grade was the year I learned I was bad at math. To gain entrance to the classroom, we lined up in the hallway and one by one, we quickly answered a multiplication fact flash card. Our teacher would hold up the flash card and signal with her fingers—one, two, three. If you didn't answer before she signaled three, to the end of the line you went. I was always one of the last students in the classroom.

In fifth grade, my teacher pulled me out into the hallway to have a talk. "Do you realize," she asked in her stern voice, "that you are going to fail fifth grade if you don't get your grades up?" She lobbied for me to be removed from the gifted education program because she thought I didn't deserve to participate in it based on my grades.

I'll admit I was stubborn. Every week, that fifth-grade teacher would assign us to write our spelling words five times each. I refused. I already knew how to spell the words. I'd been a finalist in the class spelling bee for several years. Not caring that I already knew how to spell the words, the teacher gave me a zero. Her strategy was unmotivating, to say the least. (Spoiler alert: I did manage to graduate from fifth grade, even without writing my spelling words five times each.)

Through all of this, my mother was my tireless educational advocate. She found a neurologist, who assessed me and diagnosed me with attention deficit disorder (now called inattentive ADHD) at a time when girls rarely received this diagnosis. But by then the damage was done. I had an ingrained sense of helplessness and poor work habits. My teachers never seemed to know what to do with me. I was a twice-exceptional (2e) learner at a time when that term didn't exist. Even gifted-certified teachers had no training on how to teach me.

Since then, I've earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education, a master's degree in curriculum and instruction with gifted certification, and a master's degree in counseling and family therapy. While working on my bachelor's degree, I took a class called Educating the Exceptional Child, which included a single chapter on educating gifted learners. That's just one chapter in four years on meeting the needs of gifted learners—with no mention of 2e learners. Even as I pursued my first master's degree with gifted certification, I still received no training on how to support 2e learners.

I've worked as a classroom teacher, a gifted education facilitator at the elementary and middle school levels, a school counselor, and a mental health counselor in private practice serving high-ability kids and teens. I'm continually amazed at how far we still must go as a community of educators in understanding, advocating for, and teaching 2e learners. But, bit by bit, more educators are finding inventive ways to meet these students' educational needs. Special education and gifted education teachers are collaborating to understand the intersection of giftedness and disability. Classroom teachers are beginning to advocate for accommodations and services for their students who attend both gifted and special education classes. And 2e learners are embracing their unique learning characteristics. We're on the right path, even if the path is still a long one.

Gifted learners in general are statistical outliers; 2e learners are even less common. Their additional layers of neurodiversity further complicate their education. Twice-exceptional learners face challenges for which there is no one-size-fits-all solution. These children deserve to be treated individually and to identify what works for them. When educators, parents, and learners collaborate to find what works, we often discover ways to meet not only academic needs, but also social and emotional needs.

Why I Wrote This Book

The contrasting—and sometimes conflicting or confusing—qualities of 2e students have kept us in the shadows for a long time. We've been misunderstood, disciplined, unchallenged, and left behind. We've been called lazy and unmotivated, knowing in our hearts and minds that we aren't but not understanding why we can't reach this potential everyone keeps telling us we have.

Growing up as a 2e learner led me to the field of education. I became an educator to right the wrongs I experienced as a gifted student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Working as an elementary and middle school gifted education teacher, and later as a school counselor, I saw firsthand the struggles 2e students face with inconsistent support. I currently work as a mental health counselor for people who are gifted and 2e, which allows me to support them and advocate for their needs in school. I bring my experience from the office home as I raise my own 2e children. My passion has led me to lift my voice about the needs of 2e kids in other ways too, such as through my podcast, *The Neurodiversity Podcast* (formerly called *Mind Matters*), and this book.

I've written this book to help educators, administrators, and counselors understand learners who are gifted and have a diagnosis that affects their ability to learn. To understand these students, we must look behind the mask of disability that is hiding their giftedness—or the mask of giftedness that is hiding their struggles. We need to recognize how the social and emotional needs of being gifted intersect with the implications of being labeled a troublemaker or an underachiever. Supporting 2e students from a strength-based model allows them to thrive.

My hope is that this book will help bridge the gaps among gifted education, general education, and special education classrooms by providing tools to support 2e learners in each environment where they may find themselves. Students who are gifted might also need special education services or accommodations through a Section 504 plan. Kids

with an individualized education program (IEP) may also need the challenge of a gifted program. Tying together these needs and serving the whole child can provide a safety net for 2e kids so they don't fall through the cracks in our education system. A holistic, strength-based approach can help them succeed beyond their elementary and secondary academic careers.

Progress, Not Perfection

Neurodiversity is a broad concept, and gifted kids may experience many manifestations of twice-exceptionality. We're going to cover a lot of ground in this book, and it may seem overwhelming at first. Don't worry! These are ideas, strategies, and knowledge that I've built over almost two decades of work with gifted and 2e learners in both the classroom and counseling office—and I continue to learn new things every day.

My first year teaching, I taught in a third-grade general education classroom. One student in my class was quiet, smart, and quirky, and he loved to talk to anyone and everyone about his passion for motorcycles. One day, the school counselor and I were discussing some of the kids in my class, and his name came up. She looked at me and said, "You know, I think he fits the description of this diagnosis I just learned about at a conference: Asperger's." (For more information on Asperger's syndrome, see chapter 9.) I'd never heard of this diagnosis. This wasn't that long ago. I earned my master's degree in education with gifted certification a few years after that first year of teaching, and the term *twice-exceptional* never came up in that program. I entered the gifted education classroom with no formal training on 2e students.

My experience illustrates three points. First, we are on the frontier of learning about neurodiversity, and we have a long way to go. Second, understanding of twice-exceptionality is just beginning to filter beyond the gifted education classroom to other educational professionals, so a learning curve is to be expected. Third, any and every step toward supporting 2e learners is a step in the right direction. Reading this book and recognizing that gifted learners can also have a disability (and vice versa) is just such a step.

These pointers will help you begin your journey of supporting 2e kids:

- **Use students' strengths to support their struggles.** Leveraging strengths is key to building self-efficacy.
- **Bring students into the process.** Self-awareness and self-advocacy skills will help 2e students far beyond the classroom.
- **Don't be discouraged by gradual progress.** Recognize that a 2e student's struggles didn't appear overnight, and building compensatory skills takes time too.
- **Take a team approach with your colleagues.** This book is meant to bridge the gaps among the general, special, and gifted classrooms, and each of these areas (along with support educators) is vital to meeting the needs of 2e learners.

The goal is progress, not perfection. Supporting 2e kids is a marathon, not a sprint. Gradually using your new knowledge as you become more comfortable with it will help your 2e students.

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

In this book and in all my work, I'm careful to use language that is appropriate for each diagnosis based on the current terminology preferred by the population I'm describing. For example, the autistic community prefers identity-first language (*autistic student*) instead of person-first language (*student with autism*) because many within the neurodiversity movement recognize that autism is a part of who they are and not a condition they have that needs to be cured. However, I generally use person-first language to describe students with a learning disability (for example, *student with a specific learning disability* instead of *learning disabled student*). Other times, I simply use the legal language as it relates to educational law and advocacy. Language changes as our understanding of neurology and psychology changes. I ask your forgiveness if I use a term that you find unappealing and hope you will trust that at all times, my intent is to provide validation and understanding for 2e learners.

About This Book

This book is made up of two parts. Part 1, "Supporting All Twice-Exceptional Learners," looks at the needs of 2e learners and focuses on the similarities many 2e learners share. Part 2, "Interventions for Twice-Exceptional Learners," discusses 2e learners according to the various labels or diagnoses they may have, describing the specific strengths and struggles that come with each variety of exceptionality.

Chapter 1: Understanding Twice-Exceptional Learners explores our current understanding of 2e learners and how our understanding of these students has evolved over time. It discusses ways to bridge the gap between special education and gifted education programs, as well as how to build an effective interdisciplinary team to support the needs of 2e learners in gifted, general, and special education classrooms. It also provides a resource to help screen for accommodations 2e students may need.

Chapter 2: Designing Strength-Based Instruction for Twice-Exceptional Learners identifies several general characteristics shared by many 2e learners and describes how we can use a 2e learner's strengths to support their areas of difficulty. The Strength-Based Lesson Planning Template in this chapter provides a framework to combine a student's strengths with accommodations for their struggles.

Chapter 3: Social and Emotional Needs of Twice-Exceptional Learners examines the social and emotional needs of 2e learners, including how the learning environment can directly affect their well-being. We'll talk about the impact of perfectionism on 2e learners, including how it can lead to learned helplessness and feelings of shame and vulnerability.

Chapter 4: Motivating Twice-Exceptional Learners takes a deep dive into motivation and understanding how educators can help 2e learners stay motivated in environments that weren't created with their needs in mind. It explores intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through the lens of self-determination theory and discusses ideas to instill a sense of ownership of learning in 2e students.

Chapter 5: Goal-Setting for Twice-Exceptional Learners describes how to harness 2e learners' motivation through goal-setting. It offers specific strategies to help 2e learners

set goals that support their areas of struggle. It provides a framework for students to set and reach goals by following a three-step process of self-monitoring, self-assessing, and self-regulating.

Chapter 6: Executive Functioning discusses executive functioning and addresses the ways in which executive functioning struggles affect many 2e learners. It explains how to use metacognition and goal-setting to collaboratively coach students and support their executive functioning struggles.

Part 2, “Interventions for Twice-Exceptional Learners,” breaks down the needs of 2e learners into specific diagnoses within three main categories: academic, neurodevelopmental, and emotional and behavioral. Each chapter includes information about how to identify 2e learners who may have these diagnoses, specific social and emotional considerations for the population, and ways to accommodate their learning needs from a strength-based approach.

You may notice there are some diagnoses that aren’t covered in this section. For example, this book does not specifically address oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) or Tourette’s syndrome. The reasons I have not included these diagnoses (and others) are because the diagnosis is predominantly behavioral and comorbid (co-occurring) with another diagnosis included in the book, because the diagnosis is rarely given to children, or because the diagnosis doesn’t necessitate unique educational interventions for 2e learners.

Chapter 7: Academic Diagnoses: Specific Learning Disabilities looks at 2e learners who have academic diagnoses of specific learning disabilities, also called dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. It discusses the barriers to identifying these learners and shares strategies to access special education services. We’ll consider the ways 2e students may mask their struggles or their gifts when they have these diagnoses and examine strength-based ideas to accommodate their needs in the classroom.

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 address neurodevelopmental diagnoses, including ADHD (chapter 8), autism spectrum disorder or ASD (chapter 9), and processing difficulties (chapter 10).

Chapter 8: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) looks at characteristics of 2e learners who have ADHD. It tackles the overlap between characteristics of giftedness and ADHD that can lead to a misdiagnosis or missed diagnosis in 2e learners. It provides strategies for helping 2e students with emotional regulation and rejection sensitive dysphoria, as well as a list of possible accommodations for common struggles faced by these learners.

Chapter 9: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is dedicated to autistic gifted students. It discusses the difficulty of accessing special education services for autistic gifted learners due to the IDEA definition of educational autism. The chapter defines characteristics of giftedness, autism, and both together to assist with recognizing students. It discusses lesser-known characteristics of ASD, like pathological demand avoidance and alexithymia, along with possible accommodations and modifications.

Chapter 10: Processing Difficulties addresses processing diagnoses, such as central auditory processing disorder (CAPD), visual processing disorder (VPD), and sensory processing disorder (SPD), along with manifestations in 2e learners and ideas for accommodations and modifications.

Chapter 11: Anxiety and Related Disorders looks at anxiety-based diagnoses, including generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder or social phobia, separation anxiety, selective mutism, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). It discusses the fact that anxiety is a common experience in 2e learners simply because they are 2e. It suggests ideas for accommodations and modifications for these learners.

Chapter 12: Depression and Other Mood Disorders is dedicated to gifted learners who struggle with major depressive disorder (MDD), disruptive mood dysregulation disorder (DMDD), and bipolar disorder (BD). We'll look at social and emotional considerations for these learners and talk about existential depression in gifted learners too.

Chapter 13: The Neurodiverse Classroom talks about how we can normalize neurodiversity in our schools and slowly begin both to create systemic change and to empower our 2e students to succeed.

How to Use This Book

Part 1 of this book flows best if you read the chapters in consecutive order, as the strategies therein often rely on information and terminology shared in previous chapters. You can read part 2 in the same way; however, each chapter can also stand alone as a resource for a specific student you are trying to support.

One of this book's major goals is to bridge the divides among gifted, general, and special education classrooms, so please share this resource with your school's special education department, gifted education teachers, school counselors, administrators, and professional learning communities (PLCs). Twice-exceptional learners are often right under our noses and unable to access the services they need. The more people who are on the lookout for 2e students, the more likely they are to be found and given the support they need.

Throughout the book, you'll find easy-to-use informational resources (such as the charts with various possible accommodations and modifications at the end of each chapter in part 2) and reproducible forms for you to use as you serve your 2e students (such as the Accommodations Needs Screener at the end of chapter 1 or the Strength-Based Lesson Planning Template at the end of chapter 2). Mark these pages and use them liberally. All the activities and tools are ones I've used in my clinical practice with 2e learners or during professional development training with teachers who serve 2e students.

You may also notice that many of the strategies shared in this book are helpful not only for 2e learners, but also for other students. While most of the strategies work to integrate higher-level thinking skills and are strength-based, built on common characteristics of gifted learners, you could easily generalize many of the strategies to students who are not officially 2e.

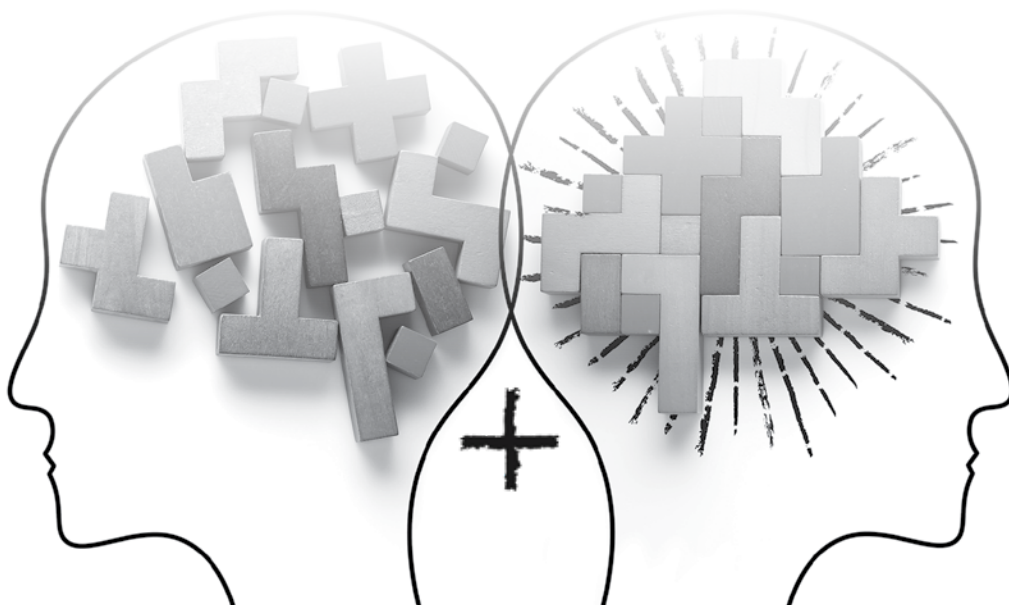
Twice-exceptional students have potential they deserve to realize. I hope you find this book useful as you support all the exceptional and amazing students in your classroom.

Emily Kircher-Morris

Part 1

SUPPORTING ALL Twice-Exceptional Learners

Part 1 looks at the big picture of 2e students. In this section we'll explore the legal precedent that advocates for 2e learners can use to help their students qualify for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or accommodations and modifications for a Section 504 plan, how the social and emotional needs of giftedness interact with other areas of exceptionality, and specific strategies in a strength-based model that are useful to support all 2e learners.



1

Understanding Twice-Exceptional Learners

A twice-exceptional learner is a student who is both cognitively gifted and has a disability as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria. Disabilities include specific learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), ADHD, physical disabilities, and speech-language disorders. Twice-exceptional learners have always been in our classrooms. But only recently have educators really begun to see the struggles 2e learners face. As the field of gifted education has grown, educators have developed a better understanding of these students who are gifted *and* have conditions such as dyslexia, ASD, ADHD, and more. The worlds of gifted education and special education are not mutually exclusive. Where they overlap, we find 2e students.

The term *twice-exceptional* originated as a description for gifted children with specific learning disabilities. Its meaning has expanded to include gifted children with any educational, neurodevelopmental, or mental health diagnoses that may entitle them to services through an IEP or a Section 504 plan. In this book, we will discuss the following diagnoses:

- specific learning disabilities in reading, writing, and math
- ADHD
- ASD
- auditory, visual, and sensory processing disorders
- anxiety disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- depression and other mood disorders

Some diagnoses that fall under the 2e umbrella are not discussed in a dedicated chapter or section of this book. The key factor I used to determine which diagnoses to include was the educational impact of the specific diagnosis. I asked myself, “Does this diagnosis require accommodations unique to 2e learners?” Using this yardstick, I decided not to dedicate a chapter or section to oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), for example, because it is a primarily behavioral diagnosis that often co-occurs with another mental health diagnosis, such as ADHD or ASD.

The 1970s were a decade of incredible progress in education. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guaranteed accommodations for students with disabilities. In 1974, the Office of the Gifted and Talented was given official status in the US Office of Education. In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act mandated free and appropriate education for all children

THE EVOLUTION OF 2E LINGO

1980s
gifted/handicapped

Early 1990s
gifted/learning disabled (GLD)

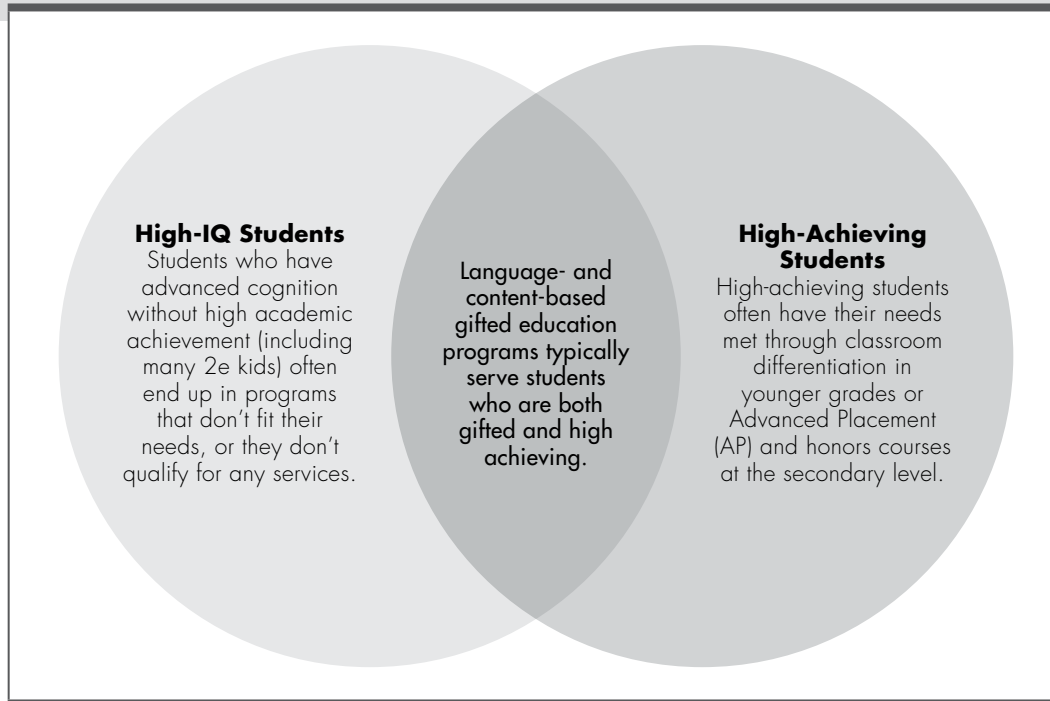
Late 1990s–early 2000s
twice-exceptional, dually diagnosed

2020s
2e, multi-exceptional, neurodivergent

with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2004 further cemented the requirement for schools to provide special education opportunities and funding. But beyond the opportunity for grants for gifted education services offered through the Javits grants programs in NCLB, gifted education services have never been federally mandated or funded. This leaves states to determine funding for gifted programming, leading to a wide variety of programs and services offered from state to state.

Because the fields of special education and gifted education evolved separately, 2e learners have a long history of being underidentified and underserved. In the field of gifted education, there's an ongoing debate: should gifted programs serve students identified as gifted based on their ability level or should they serve students who meet a benchmark of academic achievement? Some students have high cognitive ability but not high achievement, some have high achievement but not high cognitive ability, and some have both high cognitive ability and high achievement. (See **figure 1-1**.) The outcome of this debate is important for 2e kids because they have high cognitive ability but often do not achieve high grades.

Figure 1-1 Who Should Gifted Programs Serve?



In the field of special education, teachers are gradually becoming aware of 2e students. These children may not show the typical signs of a learning disability but do, in fact, need the support of specialized services and accommodations. Some students are assessed for learning disabilities or psychological diagnoses, and teachers and parents may be surprised when the students' cognitive ability scores are in the superior ranges.

The 2e community is beginning to find a voice. However, the struggle to provide them ongoing support and services is far from over.

Recognizing 2e Learners

Many 2e learners fly under the radar, especially in the early grades. Academic and social demands are lower for young children, so bright kids with learning difficulties can use their strengths to compensate for their difficulties, thus masking them. As educators, we need to recognize these strengths so we can help students capitalize on them. It is also important for us to be in tune with their struggles so we can be proactive in meeting their needs.

Linda Silverman, Barbara Gilman, Deirdre Lovecky, and Elizabeth Maxwell developed a document called “Checklist for Recognizing Twice-Exceptional Children” (see reproducible on page 28). You can use this tool and share it with families to explore the possibility of twice-exceptionality in students. The diagnoses that may apply to 2e learners aren’t always easily recognized even in students who are not gifted and therefore don’t have gifted traits masking their struggles. When a bright student in your class is struggling, the checklist can help you determine if there is a reason to pursue additional evaluation. This checklist is simply a tool to start a conversation with other educators or students’ parents or guardians. It is not a tool for comparing students. There is no cutoff score that indicates the presence or absence of a diagnosis. However, examining patterns of behaviors and characteristics common in 2e learners through the descriptions on the checklist can help you identify areas for further evaluation. Remember that families might need additional support as they realize that their children may have disabilities along with their giftedness.

Several characteristics on the checklist may seem applicable to many students in many situations. The goal of using the checklist is to look for trends and identify areas that are more of a struggle than others. For example, let’s say you have checked “Sometimes/Often” several times for a student who struggles in reading, and you notice that a majority of these checks fall under “Visual Processing Weaknesses” and “Dyslexia or Stealth Dyslexia.” This pattern offers a clue about what might be impeding the child’s reading success—and what you might want to observe or assess further.

Catching Twice-Exceptionality

Many exceptional students are placed on a single educational path based on their initial referral. Students initially referred for special education services are rarely referred for gifted testing. Likewise, students who are labeled as gifted are seldom screened for learning difficulties. It is important to provide appropriate educational opportunities for students based on their individual learning needs. Gifted education is offered to students because every student deserves to be cognitively challenged at a level appropriate for their ability and to avoid the negative effects (like boredom, perfectionism, and poor work habits) of remaining unchallenged in other class settings. Special education is offered to help provide the supports and instruction needed for students who have struggles that can’t be supported solely within the general education classroom. Both are necessary services; some students require both.

SPOTTING GIFTEDNESS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

To make sure you don't miss gifted students who are already identified for special education, take the following steps:

1. **Train special educators and counselors to spot traits of 2e children.** Students who participate in general education classes may show qualities of giftedness in the classroom. They may also have cognitive assessments on file showing advanced performance in certain cognitive areas despite a full-scale score within the average range.
2. **Use universal screening tools** to catch gifted students who may not be nominated by their teachers. Twice-exceptional learners often fly under the radar.
3. **Find alternative methods to qualify students for gifted services.** Twice-exceptional learners may not have the academic scores often used to qualify students for gifted services. Look for evidence of exceptional creativity or advanced abstract reasoning and problem solving to obtain support services.

SPOTTING SPECIAL NEEDS IN GIFTED EDUCATION

Many characteristics of giftedness overlap with characteristics of special needs. Because of this overlap and because of the stigma surrounding certain educational and medical diagnoses, families and educators may hesitate to address their concerns in the academic setting. They may describe them as signs of asynchronous development or quirkiness. Many in the gifted community are cautious to avoid misdiagnosis by a person unfamiliar with the characteristics associated with high ability.

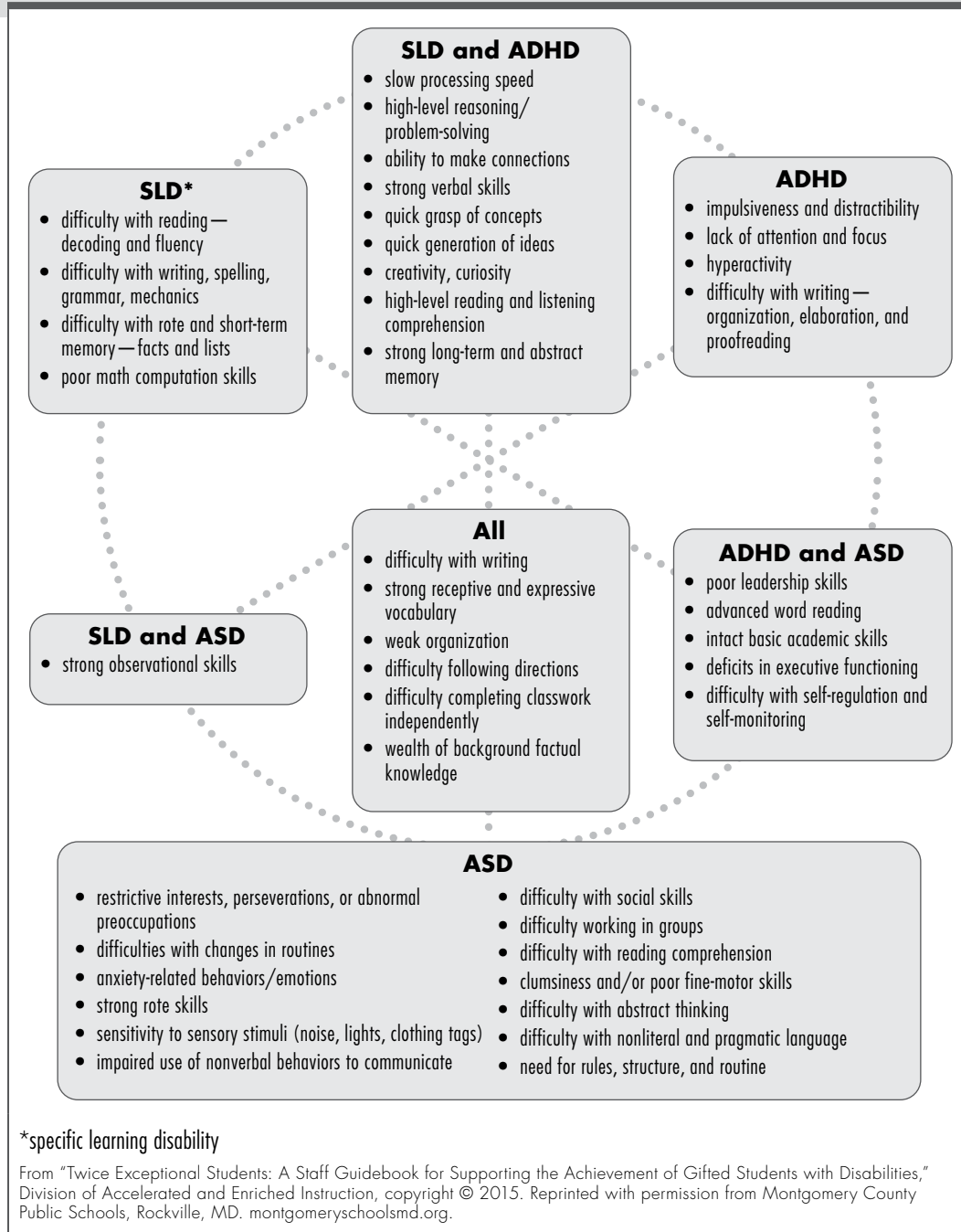
When a gifted child is showing signs of academic, social, or emotional struggle, the urge to ignore these concerns and label them as traits of giftedness can hurt the 2e child, whose special needs do not get diagnosed. Sorting through the child's behaviors to understand their underlying cause can help distinguish an educational or clinical concern from a developmental issue that will resolve itself with minimal support. A thorough understanding of the underlying cause for the struggle is necessary to determine next steps.

Additionally, the characteristics of students with various diagnoses often overlap. For example, almost all 2e diagnoses include some type of executive functioning struggle. Students can also be multi-exceptional, having multiple diagnoses plus giftedness. In **figure 1-2**, a chart developed by Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland to help staff understand the commonalities and differences among 2e students, you can see the overlap under the heading "All."

The most effective way to catch twice-exceptionality is for a professional familiar with gifted development to complete a comprehensive evaluation. Training in the characteristics of 2e learners is necessary to identify the learning needs of these students. Appearances can be deceiving with 2e learners. Typical assessment tools may not be adequate to identify their needs. Throughout this book, I will discuss assessment tools for each diagnosis. These discussions will address the subtle things that may be missed by an evaluator unfamiliar with gifted learners. In general, it is important to remember that high-ability learners often compensate for their struggles and that typical scoring standards may not meet the needs of gifted learners. For example, with diagnoses such as ADHD and ASD, an individual with

high ability may have scores on a diagnostic assessment that are below the typical cutoff for diagnosis; however, this result may be a “false negative” masking a diagnosis that will become more apparent as the child gets older.

Figure 1-2 2e Commonalities



GIFTED BEHAVIOR OR CAUSE FOR CONCERN?

There are a few classic classroom concerns that are associated with giftedness as well. Often, teasing out whether the behavior is a result of a child's high ability or a disability is tricky. Throughout this book, we will discuss a variety of strategies to determine when an assessment or extra support is needed for these behaviors. Here are a few behaviors that can be a sign of giftedness or a cause for concern:

- **Inattention:** Is the child bored because of insufficient challenge, or is the child unable to focus?
 - **Impulsivity:** Does the student blurt out answers due to quick processing and copious knowledge, or does the student have an executive functioning deficit in response inhibition?
 - **Refusal to write:** Is this perfectionism associated with giftedness, or is it a learning difficulty in written expression?
 - **Poor social skills:** Is the child truly unable to interact socially with peers, or does the child have nothing in common with them due to giftedness?
-

Underserved 2e Learners

Educators across the United States are grappling with the reality of inequities in our schools. Gifted education, in particular, is reckoning with how to identify culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students for gifted education programs, after having historically denied these learners access to these programs.

When a student comes from a CLD background, or is an English language learner (ELL), or is economically disadvantaged *and* is 2e, their chance of being identified for gifted services drops dramatically. Shawn A. Robinson authored a paper describing this unique situation and used the phrase *triple identity theory* to describe his experience as a gifted Black student with dyslexia (Robinson 2017). Robinson and Joy Lawson Davis cowrote a chapter on the needs of CLD learners in the book *Twice Exceptional: Teaching Bright and Creative Students with Learning Difficulties* (Davis and Robinson 2018). **They used the term 3e to describe students whose identities include giftedness, cultural diversity, and a diagnosed disability.**

Who Are 3e Learners?

If 2e learners are twice-exceptional, 3e learners are thrice-exceptional. They have another factor to consider in identification for educational services. The 3e category includes three distinct groups of students at risk of being missed for receiving gifted and/or special education services—CLD learners, ELL students, and economically disadvantaged students (Ritchotte, Lee, and Graefe 2019):

- **Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners** are students whose households differ in some way from what is considered the majority or mainstream culture of the United States: White, middle-to-upper-income families. For example, these students may have African, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, or Middle Eastern

heritages, to name only a few. Linguistically diverse families may speak another language at home while the student speaks English in academic settings.

- **English language learning (ELL)** students speak primarily a language other than English. They may have had some exposure to English and may speak it in social situations, but they struggle with the more difficult academic language used in classrooms.
- **Economically disadvantaged students** are students who live in poverty. For these students, food and housing stability may be a concern, or they may lack access to appropriate healthcare services. It may be difficult for students living in economically disadvantaged households to compensate for the chronic stress caused by living in poverty.

Barriers to Identifying 3e Students

Bright CLD, ELL, and economically disadvantaged students already face barriers to accessing gifted education services. When you combine these systemic barriers with another disability or diagnosis, the identification procedure becomes even more complex.

Schools that ask teachers to recommend students for gifted services create an obstacle for identifying high-ability students who do not fit the stereotype of a gifted student. Due to common misconceptions about giftedness, many educators overlook 3e students. They may have internalized the (incorrect) image of a gifted student as a highly verbal, high-achieving, compliant student. Students who are 3e do not typically fit this mold, so we need to find other ways to identify and serve these students.

Another barrier to identifying 3e students appears when an adult perceives a student as a discipline or behavior problem instead of a child with an academic, neurodevelopmental, or mental health diagnosis. Think about a Black student who is gifted and autistic. Research shows Black students are less likely than White students to be warned about behavior that's perceived as disrespectful before being disciplined (Wegmann and Smith 2019). This student could be disciplined for a lagging skill that's directly related to their diagnosis—and the teacher's bias. And being cognitively gifted makes it possible that their diagnosis is masked and unrecognized.

CLD and ELL students are less likely to show their cognitive ability on a test that relies heavily on verbal skills. Most IQ tests used for special education and gifted education services are heavily verbal, even though assessment options are available that give a clearer picture for students whose language barriers may suppress their overall cognitive scores. Additionally, educators may not be aware of or willing to use alternative qualification criteria to account for the differences that may appear in cognitive testing.

Strategies for Identifying 3e Students

Here are several steps educators can take to prevent 3e students from falling through the cracks:

- Use universal screening tools to identify gifted learners. When we cast a wider net and give every student the opportunity to show their ability, we are more likely to find all the high-ability students. To account for 3e learners, be sure to compare screening scores with achievement scores and look for signs of discrepancy between classroom achievement and cognitive ability.

- Educate families about characteristics of giftedness and twice-exceptionality. Parents of CLD, ELL, and economically disadvantaged students may lack the cultural capital (experience, knowledge, and connections) to navigate the educational system and advocate for their children. Make sure to provide information in a language appropriate for the family's background.
- Recognize that 3e CLD and ELL students are more likely to show their ability on assessments that do not rely heavily on verbal ability. Choosing appropriate tests is the best way to measure a student's overall ability.
- Connect learning to students' backgrounds and use learning materials representative of their cultural heritage. If students are learning information about a culture that is very different from their own experience, they will be less able to make higher-level connections and analyses commensurate with their ability.
- Examine qualification criteria and look for restrictive identification procedures. The best way to identify gifted learners who don't fit the typical mold is to have several paths to qualify for gifted services that take into account the characteristics of students from diverse backgrounds.

Twice-Exceptional Learners with Physical Disabilities

Gifted students with physical disabilities should not be excluded from the framework of 2e learners. Students who are identified for special education services under the umbrellas of visual impairment (including blindness), deafness, hearing impairment, or orthopedic impairment (such as cerebral palsy) should be considered for gifted education programs and services with the accommodations necessary for them to access the gifted education curriculum.

One of the main difficulties in identifying these students for gifted education services is the fact that they may already be in the special education system. Many students who are placed in special education services are never assessed (or never assessed appropriately) for gifted education services. One study found that of 13,000 students identified for special education services, 330 students had achievement scores above the 90th percentile. Of those 330 high-achieving students, only about 11 percent of them were participating in gifted education services, and the likelihood of those participating in gifted and talented programs being African-American, Hispanic, or female was low (Barnard-Brak et al. 2015). This discrepancy shows the stark disconnect between the special education and gifted education departments in many school districts.

Sometimes, students who begin the special education process are administered a cognitive assessment, and if those scores indicate a child may qualify for gifted education services, the IEP team may provide a referral to the gifted education department. It is important not to rely solely on this process, though. Students with physical disabilities may never receive a cognitive assessment by the IEP team because the basis of their special education services is a medical condition or diagnosis. The IEP team may have used anecdotal information and determined that cognitive skills were not an area of concern and therefore did not need to be assessed.

Universal screening is one way to assess all students for gifted education services. Other standardized or district-wide testing and benchmarks can also provide

information about students who should be screened for gifted education services. Additionally, assessment teams may need to be creative and flexible about the best tests that can capture a student's true ability. Your district's school psychologists, psychological examiners, or special education administrators should have access to and knowledge of the tests available within the district and know which will meet individual students' needs, if it appears the tests being used aren't capturing a student's true ability.

NATALIA'S STORY

Natalia had just entered middle school and was getting used to the new routine of changing classes between each period. She had a paraprofessional with her at the beginning of the school year to help her get comfortable with the layout of the school. Natalia was visually impaired and used a cane to help her navigate the halls of the school. Within a few weeks, she was able to leave each class a few minutes early to make her way independently to her next class.

Around the same time, the school got the results of the annual state assessment tests. The gifted education facilitator went through all the results to screen for gifted education candidates. He noticed Natalia's scores were high enough to qualify her for screening for the gifted education program. But when he looked through her file, there was no record of a previous screening for gifted education services. Her latest IEP reevaluation included no cognitive assessments due to the fact that her qualification for special education services was related to a medical diagnosis of visual impairment.

After the gifted education facilitator spoke to the district's special education evaluation team, the school developed a plan to assess Natalia's cognitive abilities. Using a common cognitive assessment, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), they assessed Natalia's verbal, visual-spatial, and fluid reasoning skills. Her verbal composite score was above the 95th percentile, but her overall General Ability Index (GAI) was suppressed due to her weak visual-spatial skills. The district chose to enroll Natalia in the gifted education program based on her verbal comprehension composite score and recognizing the impact of her visual impairment. ■

Services and Accommodations for 2e Learners

Services and accommodations for 2e learners take two main forms: IEPs and Section 504 plans. A key factor influencing whether a child is placed on an IEP or a 504 plan is the type of diagnosis they receive. An educational diagnosis is established after the school has conducted its own evaluation and the child has met state and federal criteria for a diagnosis approved under the IDEA. A medical diagnosis is given by a medical doctor or qualified mental health professional and uses diagnostic criteria established in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Fifth Edition* (DSM-5) or the International Classification of Diseases: Tenth Edition (ICD-10).

An IEP is a plan that provides both specialized services and accommodations for a student. An IEP requires an educational diagnosis to qualify, and it includes specific goals and growth targets that are tracked by a special educator. Students may receive their special education services through a resource room, a class within a class (CWC), or a support class built into the child’s schedule.

A Section 504 plan is often limited to accommodations and modifications that can be implemented within the classroom. Accommodations provide different strategies for a student to learn the material—for example, listening to an audiobook instead of reading a text, or using flexible seating in a classroom. Modifications change the content or structure of the work in some way—for example, reducing the number of items a student needs to do for a homework assignment. A Section 504 plan is established based on a physical or mental health medical diagnosis and how much the diagnosis affects a student’s ability to function in various areas of life. Although services typically provided through special education programs, such as occupational therapy or CWC support, are not the norm for students on a Section 504 plan, they are legally eligible for those services, if their diagnoses would be best supported in this way (US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 2016). Students who receive support through a Section 504 plan do not receive the same progress monitoring as students tracking growth for a goal stated within an IEP. For a side-by-side comparison of IEPs and Section 504 plans, see figure 1-3.

Figure 1-3 IEP Versus 504

	Individualized Education Program	Section 504 Plan
What is it?	An IEP is a plan developed to identify special instruction or related services to meet a child’s academic, social, or emotional needs.	A Section 504 plan defines the specific accommodations and modifications a student needs to access the general education curriculum.
How does a student qualify?	The school conducts an assessment to determine the presence of an area of disability as defined by the IDEA. The diagnoses seen in 2e students that fall into this category are specific learning disability, emotional disturbance, educational diagnosis of autism, speech and language impairment, and other health impairment.	Students qualify for a Section 504 plan based on a learning, behavior, or medical condition generally diagnosed outside the school (although the school may conduct assessments to determine the impact of the diagnosis). The disability must substantially impact major life activities for the student in areas such as thinking, learning, concentrating, or performing manual tasks.
What does it provide?	A student with an IEP receives services provided by a certified special educator. Services are defined as a number of minutes a student is in contact with a special educator providing instruction. Student progress is measured annually based on goals set at each IEP meeting.	A Section 504 plan meets a student’s needs through accommodations and modifications made in the classroom, like modifying assignments or altering the learning environment. It is possible, but uncommon, for a student to receive special education services, such as occupational therapy or CWC placement.
What agency oversees it?	US Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights