

# Twice Exceptional Children

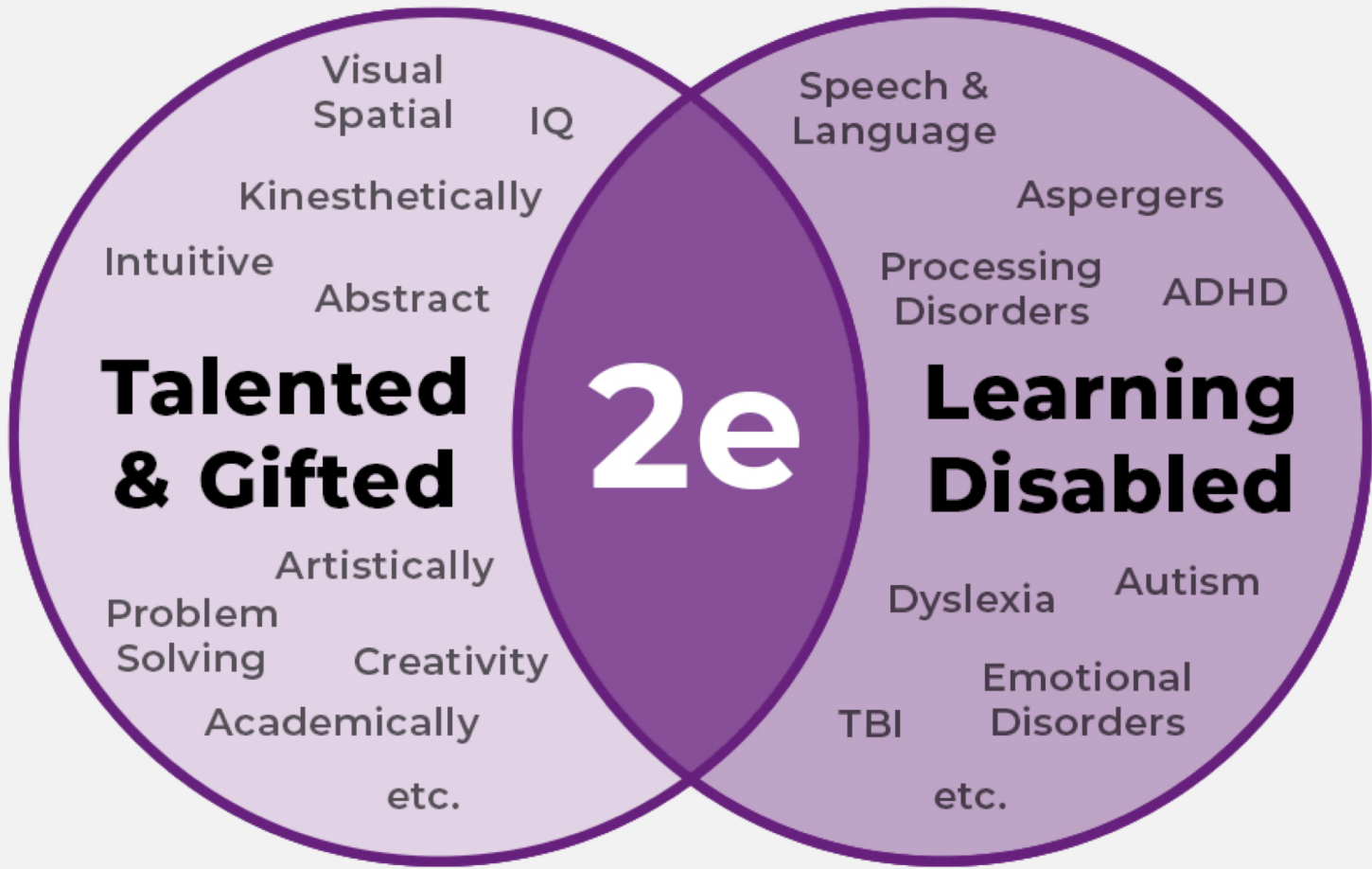
*Meeting the Needs of Gifted Children  
with Learning Disabilities*



Prepared by: Leila Pirnia  
Psy 658: Development Through the Lifespan  
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# What is Twice Exceptional?

- Children who are identified as gifted but also have evidence of a disability, as per federal or state eligibility criteria.
  - The Individual with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act guarantees 1) free appropriate education 2) least restrictive environment 3) supplemental aids and services 4) assessment
- Disabilities may include specific learning disabilities (SpLD), speech and language disorders, processing disorders, emotional/behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, autism spectrum, or other impairments such as ADHD
- Also referred to as “2e”
- 2e students highly knowledgeable and talented in at least one particular domain however giftedness is often overshadowed by their disabilities



**Talented  
& Gifted**

**2e**

**Learning  
Disabled**

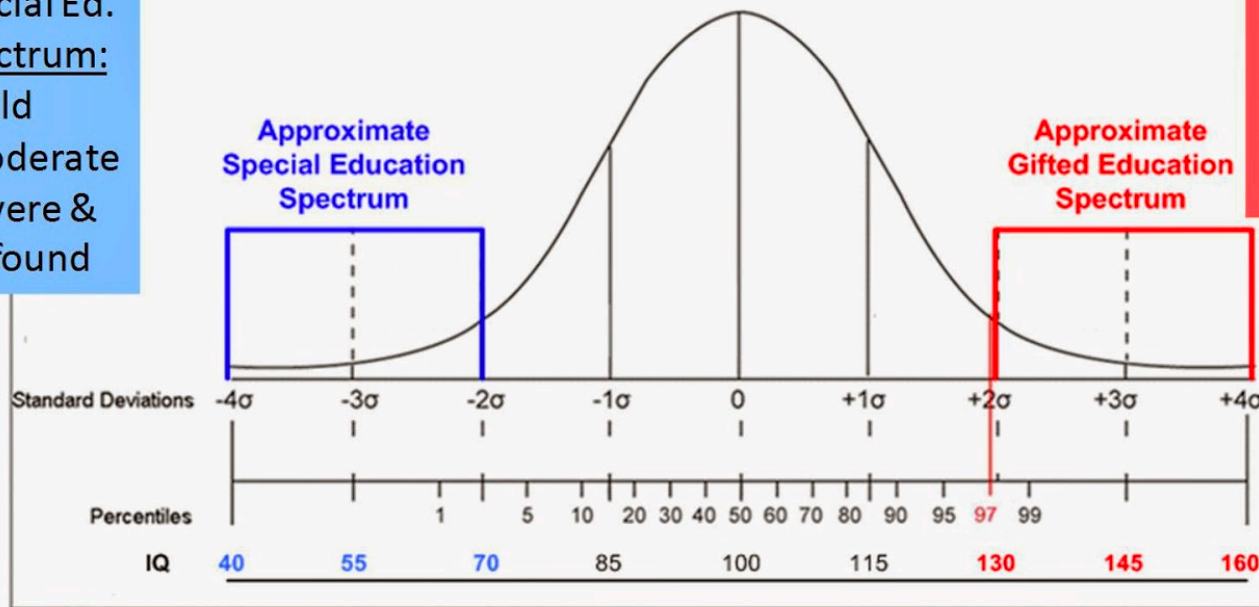
# The IQ Bell Curve

To more appropriately meet the needs of exceptional learners, neither end of the spectrum can have a “one-size fits all” approach.

BELL CURVE OF EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

Special Ed. Spectrum:

- Mild
- Moderate
- Severe & Profound



Gifted Ed. Spectrum:

- Gifted
- Highly Gifted
- Profoundly Gifted

**Twice Exceptional (2e)** is when, due to cognitive processing abilities, physical limitations, etc. an individual has a need for services in both extremes of the spectrum.

# Attributes of Gifted vs 2e

## Gifted

vs

## 2e

- Developmental asynchrony (uneven development – advanced cognitively but delayed in other areas such as in social/emotional and motor skills)
- Highly developed curiosity
- Precocious development and use of language
- Active imagination
- Tendency toward divergent (creative and unusual) thinking
- Keen observation skills
- Ability, from an early age, to remember large amounts of information
- Unusual sense of humor
- Advanced moral reasoning about issues related to fairness and justice
- High-level reasoning powers and problem-solving abilities
- Heightened sensitivities (referred to by psychiatrist/psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski as overexcitabilities) in these areas:
  - Psychomotor
  - Sensual
  - Imaginational
  - Intellectual
  - Emotional

- Disorganized, often losing track of belongings
- Uneven academic pattern with extreme areas of both strength and weakness
- Trouble remembering to do or follow through with tasks and sticking to a schedule
- Poor sense of time and difficulty estimating the time needed to complete tasks
- Difficulty performing multi-step instructions and performing tasks sequentially
- Slower to process language and respond than might be expected, based on their intelligence
- Difficulty taking a systematic approach to problem solving
- Writing difficulties, including trouble organizing thoughts, writing legibly, and spelling
- Fear of embarrassment that leads to avoidance of risk taking in the classroom
- May have narrowly focused interests
- May show less maturity than their age peers

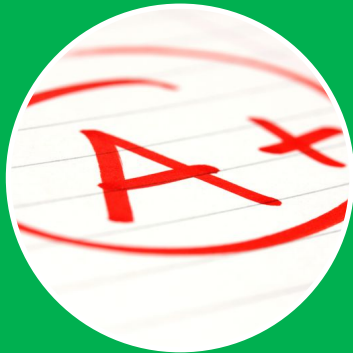
# What Does the Research Say?

- A comprehensive evaluation is critical to obtaining a full understanding of the twice-exceptional individual's academic and social and emotional needs (Foley Nicpon et al., 2010).
- Two approaches exist in understanding individuals with learning difficulties (Assouline & Whiteman, 2011):
  - an **educational** approach based on federal legislation (the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 2004) and
  - a **psychological** approach based on identifying learning or behavioral disorders as determined through diagnostic criteria.
- Professionals other than gifted educators are less likely to have exposure to the concepts of giftedness and twice-exceptionality (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013).

# What Does the Research Say?

- Gifted education programming had a positive impact on the achievement in math and reading of gifted students with ASD (Assouline et al., 2010).
- Students with ASD can have very high general, verbal, and/or nonverbal ability and simultaneous weaknesses in memory and the ability to process information (Foley Nicpon, Assouline, & Stinson, 2012).
- Children who have very high verbal ability but average (or lower) achievement may have a specific learning disability (Assouline et al., 2010).
- Gifted students with ADHD may present with lower self-esteem compared with those without a diagnosis; findings suggest that their self-esteem was higher than that of members of the general population; high cognitive ability may be a mitigating factor (Foley Nicpon, Rickels, et al., 2012).

# Obstacles to Services



Gifted kids are good  
at everything



Gifted children are  
always mature,  
self-directed, and  
well behaved



Gifted children don't  
need any extra help.  
They are smart  
enough to figure it  
out themselves





# What Does 2e look like?



**Above average achievement:** Identified as gifted, with subtle difficulties in specific areas. Often told to just “try harder” in those areas. giftedness masks the disability.



**Struggling:** Tested because of a suspected disability, and giftedness is also discovered. The disability masks the giftedness.



**Average achievement:** Performs at the same level as his or her peers. The giftedness masks the disability, and the disability masks the giftedness.

- Bright child who is “difficult”
- Verbally gifted student with advanced vocabulary but simplistic written language
- Student who has mastered math concepts but struggles computationally
- Large splits between weaknesses and strengths
- Student who loves to learn but hates school

# Diagnosis

- IEP process at school to identify giftedness & disabilities
- Formal assessments by psychologists:
  - individually administered IQ tests
  - diagnostic achievement tests
  - tests of aptitude
  - tests of creativity
- Informal assessments:
  - evaluation by experts or teachers
  - classroom observation
  - peer evaluations
  - parent interviews

# Teacher's Strategies for Growth

- Early identification & early intervention for disabilities
- Teach specific learning strategies to overcome weaknesses.
- Teach the way they learn. Try different methods until you find one that “fits”.
- Focus on experiential rather than instructional learning
- Focus on strengths rather than weaknesses.
- Pace tasks appropriately – compact curriculum in strength areas and provide additional time in areas of need.

# Teacher's Strategies for Growth

Area of Difficulty	Related Behaviors	Suggested Strategies
Organization	Doesn't complete assignments	Incentive system, alternative assignments
	Loses homework/possessions	Daily check-ins, checklists, reminders, routines, targeted incentive systems
	Doesn't come to class prepared	Spare materials in classes that students can borrow
	Disorganized notebooks	Daily notebook checks
	Messy work	Specify clear criteria and have students resubmit work that does not meet criteria, modify expectations
Remembering	Handing in assignments, knowing due dates	Daily check-in, incentive system
	Math facts/other rote memory tasks	Memory aids, use of calculators when possible, reduce demands
Following Directions	Verbal	Provide study partner, repeat directions individually
	Written	Check-in with student, provide clarification when needed, highlight directions for student
Written Production	Poor fine motor skills/motor impersistence	Access to computers for writing assignments when available, reduce writing requirements
	Difficulty organizing thoughts	Assistance with prewriting activities (e.g., brainstorming, outlining), write ideas on index cards so they will be easy to reorganize
	Proofreading problems	Use spell check, have another student/adult proofread, use a proofreading checklist to cue for specific errors
Problems with Test-Taking	Careless mistakes	Supervise checking over work
	Cannot finish within time limits	Allow extra time, break testing into several smaller sessions
Social Skills	Impulsive, disruptive, apathetic, discouraged	Incentive systems, negotiated behavior contract, high rate of personalized positive feedback, hands-on learning
Cognitive Style	Fast and sloppy	Assign shorter tasks with criteria for accuracy, teach self-evaluation, set goals
	Low frustration tolerance	Modify assignments, ensure high rate of success, frequent reinforcement, provide individual help
	Craves novelty/hates repetition	Avoid lecture format or heavy rote learning requirements, use computers and technology when available, use cooperative learning and hands-on learning, avoid unnecessary repetition, build in breaks, vary formats within class periods

# Therapist's Strategies for Growth

- Understand how the individual's diagnosis was determined and (in a K–12 setting) become aware of the rights available via a 504 plan for accommodations or an IEP;
- Set goal to promote the individual's development of self-advocacy and problem-solving skills, particularly as he or she transitions out of formal education.
- Ensure that twice-exceptional children have access to gifted and talented programming in and outside of academic settings; assist with finding funding (i.e.: school district) if cost is a potential barrier or public programs.
- Review the records of each client and consider both strengths and weaknesses in and out of the classroom in formulating treatment plans; help families advocate for a comprehensive evaluation if one has not been obtained. (Foley, 2015)

# Therapist's Strategies for Growth

- Underachievement may be due to a disability, not to a poor attitude or a lack of motivation; help teachers and families determine the cause behind the presenting symptoms.
- Adjust language and conceptualization based on the child's abilities and level of insight. For example, children with ASD can have exceptional verbal comprehension and learn material at a greater depth compared with their peers.
- Allow sufficient time for children to process the information that is being presented; change in therapy may happen more slowly with twice-exceptional clients; recommend or offer accelerative opportunities in their talent domains.
- Be aware of the potential need to address self-esteem difficulties among gifted individuals with ADHD; help assess career and lifestyle opportunities for older children. (Foley, 2015)

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**End and Extras**





**Students whose learning/attention issues and giftedness mask each other**

strengths and weaknesses seem to “cancel each other out.”



**Learning/attention issues mask giftedness**

if in a special ed. placement, may be bored and act out as they aren't being challenged



**Strong analytic/comprehension skills**

**High verbal expressive ability**

**Good conceptual understanding**

**Extensive vocabularies**

**Sophisticated sense of humour**

**Extraordinary interest or talent in a particular area**

**Often learn compensatory strategies on their own**



**Academic underachievement**

**Frustration, lack of motivation**

**Often inattentive or off task**

**Poor peer relationships**

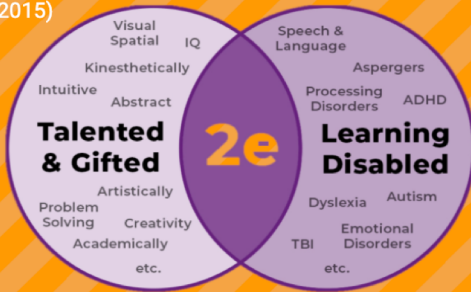
**Dislike for school or school failure**

**Poor organizational skills**

**Generalize feelings of academic failure to overall inadequacy**

# What Does it Mean to be Twice-Exceptional or 2e?

Students who demonstrate gifts and talents but also have a disability are known as twice exceptional, or 2e. They do not fit the stereotypical characteristics of students with a disability or giftedness. (Baldwin et al., 2015)



# 4%

of LAUSD gifted students were considered **TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL** IN 2019

Source: Source: Los Angeles Unified School District (2019). Division of Instruction. Advanced Learning Options. Gifted/Talented Programs.

Created by Leila Pirnia as a best-practices template for LAUSD

# 2e in LAUSD

## GIFTED COMES IN MANY FORMS

LAUSD identifies students as gifted/talented in seven ability categories: Intellectual, High Achievement, Specific Academic, Leadership, Creative, Visual Arts and Performing Arts

## IDENTIFICATION OF DIVERSE POPULATIONS

LAUSD's Targeted Identification Program (TIP) screens and identifies students from low-referring and low-identifying schools and identifies underrepresented gifted/talented learners

## DIFFERENTIATED CURRICULUM IS GUARANTEED

Once identified, all gifted/talented students—including 2es—must have equitable access to differentiated curriculum, instruction and educational options in their specific area of talent(s) and receive appropriate services that support and advance their learning

## RIGOROUS COURSEWORK OFFERINGS

Ensuring the appropriate clustering and class placement of twice-exceptional students in rigorous college preparatory courses, e.g., Advanced Placement, honors, AVID.

## NON-NEGOTIABLE DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Utilizing research-based GATE strategies with emphasis on the "non-negotiables" of differentiated instruction for gifted learners, i.e., depth, complexity, acceleration, and novelty, in conjunction with meeting IEP and Section 504 plan goals, including teaching social and other academic skills

To identify gifted and talented students, including those from diverse racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, and provide high-quality differentiated opportunities for learning that meet students' particular abilities and talents.

# Meeting the Needs of Gifted Children with Learning Disabilities

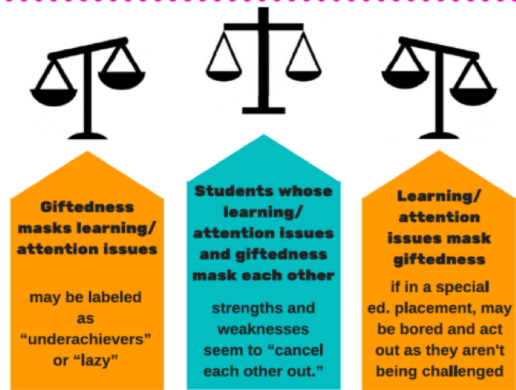


## A Parent's Guide to Maximizing Their Child's Potential and Advocating for Their Needs



[www.2einLAUSD.net](http://www.2einLAUSD.net)

# Why Do 2e Kids Go Unidentified?



# Identifying Traits of 2e Kids

- Strong analytic/comprehension skills
- Highly developed curiosity
- High verbal expressive quality
- Extensive vocabularies
- Keen observation skills
- Good conceptual understanding
- Extraordinary interest or talent in particular area
- Tendency toward divergent/creative thinking
- Heightened sensitivities



- Academic underachievement
- Frustration, lack of motivation
  - Disorganized, loses track
  - Poor spelling & handwriting
  - Difficulty following multi-step directions
- Poor peer relationships
  - Trouble organizing thoughts
- Often inattentive or off task
  - Fear of embarrassment, leads to excessive avoidance of risk-taking

# 5 Strategies for Success

## IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

Include representatives from gifted education, special education teachers, school psychologists, occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, classroom teachers, administrators, counselors, students, and parents.

## COLLABORATE WITH A PROBLEM-SOLVING TEAM

This group will collaborate to develop an instructional plan for the student, monitor its success and measure growth.

## DETERMINE STRENGTHS/INTERESTS

Identify the student's strengths and interests and determine specific ways these strengths will be implemented, enhanced, and utilized to bolster deficits.

## DETERMINE WEAKNESSES/NEEDS

Identify the student's challenges and concerns to determine specific goals for improvement.

## DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

The plan should include: goals, interventions to achieve goals, interventionist, frequency and duration, method of progress monitoring, materials needed, and necessary accommodations or modifications. Be sure to record progress or lack of success and modify as needed.



# Tips to Share With Teachers



# Parent Tips

- Give the child the opportunity to live-up to their potential by maintaining appropriate expectations, developing their strengths and talents and providing enriching extra-curricular opportunities.
- Model advocacy skills by working with educators to ensure the child receives appropriate modifications & services to accommodate diverse learning styles
- Tap into the child's strengths to bolster deficits and learn compensatory strategies for weaknesses
- Foster positive relationships with adults in the child's life such as mentors, supportive family members, coaches, tutors, etc.

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Back page source: Los Angeles Unified School District (2020). *Division of Instruction. Advanced Learning Options. Gifted/Talented Programs*. <https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/14720>