

# Twice-Exceptional Students: Gifted Students with Disabilities

Twice-exceptional students (often termed 2e) represent a puzzle to their teachers and their parents, and often to themselves. How can they be so advanced in one area and struggle so much in another area? By understanding their areas of strength as well as their areas of challenge, adults can help 2e students develop their gifts and work to overcome their disabilities.

Twice-exceptional students are difficult to identify because they possess the characteristics of gifted students and the characteristics of students with disabilities. Gifted characteristics may mask disabilities, or disabilities may mask gifted potential. Either the strengths, the disabilities, or both may not be identified.

Gifted students with disabilities are at-risk because their educational and social-emotional needs often go undetected. The inconsistent academic performance can lead educators to believe 2e students are not putting forth adequate effort. They may be labeled as “lazy.” Hidden disabilities may prevent students with advanced abilities from achieving their potential.

The frustrations related to unidentified strengths and disabilities can result in behavioral and social-emotional issues. For some twice-exceptional students, behavior plans become the focus of their interventions. The behaviors are managed, but the underlying disabilities are never addressed. School can become a very frustrating experience for struggling 2e students, their teachers, and parents. It is essential that the disabilities are identified early so appropriate interventions can be provided at the right times. It is also important that the student’s giftedness be identified as early as possible, because working in the area of strength and interest increases a student’s motivation.

A collaborative effort between classroom teachers, special educators, gifted educators, and parents is needed to identify twice-exceptional students and implement strategies to meet their diverse needs. Educators can implement strategies to develop their potential, to identify learning gaps and provide explicit instruction, to support the development of compensatory strategies, to foster their social-emotional development, and to enhance their capacity to cope with mixed abilities. Parents can learn about twice-exceptionality, communicate with the child’s teachers to help them understand him or her, and provide the support and encouragement their child needs.

## **(Resources for parents on reverse side.)**

The contents of this handout were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

Colorado Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services Unit  
(303) 866-6694 / [www.cde.state.co.us/offices/exceptionalstudentservicesunit](http://www.cde.state.co.us/offices/exceptionalstudentservicesunit)

For more information, please visit

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/twice-exceptional>

Twice-exceptional students are those who are both

- Identified as gifted according to state criteria in one or more of the categories of giftedness (general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative and productive thinking, leadership ability, or arts ability)

**AND**

- Identified with a disability according to federal/state criteria – and the disability qualifies them for either an IEP or a Section 504 plan.



## Resources for Parents

### Websites:

- [Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented](http://www.coloradogifted.org) www.coloradogifted.org
- [National Association for Gifted Children](http://www.nagc.org) www.nagc.org
- [The Center for Bright Kids](http://www.centerforbrightkids.org) www.centerforbrightkids.org
- [Understood.org](http://www.understood.org) www.understood.org

### Publications:

- [2e Newsletter](http://www.2enewsletter.com) www.2enewsletter.com
- [Parenting for High Potential](http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/nagc-publications/parenting-high-potential) (an NAGC Publication) http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/nagc-publications/parenting-high-potential
- [Parenting Your Twice-Exceptional Child](http://www.2enewsletter.com/topic_store_spotlight.html) (from *2e Newsletter* Spotlight series) http://www.2enewsletter.com/topic\_store\_spotlight.html

### Books:

- *Overcoming Dyslexia* by Sally Shaywitz (2003, [Vintage Books/Knopf-Doubleday](http://www.knopfdoubleday.com/imprint/vintage)) www.knopfdoubleday.com/imprint/vintage
- *School Success for Kids with ADHD* by Stephan Silverman, Jacqueline Iseman & Sue Jeweler (2009, [Prufrock Press](http://www.prufrock.com))
- *School Success for Kids with Asperger's Syndrome* by Stephan Silverman & Rich Weinfeld (2007, [Prufrock Press](http://www.prufrock.com))
- *School Success for Kids with Autism* by Andrew Egel, Katherine Holman & Christine Barthold (2012, [Prufrock Press](http://www.prufrock.com))
- *Successful Strategies for Twice-Exceptional Students* by Kevin Besnoy, Frances Karnes & Kristen Stephens (2006, [Prufrock Press](http://www.prufrock.com))
- *The Survival Guide for Kids with Learning Differences* by Rhonda Cummings (2016, [Free Spirit Publishing](http://www.freespirit.com)) www.freespirit.com
- *To Be Gifted and Learning Disabled* by Susan Baum & Steven Owen (2004, Creative Learning Press – now owned by Prufrock Press)
- *Understanding Twice-Exceptional Gifted Children* by Beverly Trail (2011, [Prufrock Press](http://www.prufrock.com)) www.prufrock.com