Serving Twice-Exceptional Gifted Learners
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Serving Twice-Exceptional Gifted Learners

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Cover Photo by Dan Nelson
How must it feel to be highly intelligent, but unable to demonstrate that intelligence because of concomitant attributes that provide obstacles to optimum use of that intelligence? I can only imagine the frustration and even despair that children must feel in this circumstance. To know that you can easily figure things out in your mind and yet appear as less than able to classmates and adults has to grind down one’s self confidence and eagerness to learn. We have focused on the topic of twice-exceptional learners (2e) several times in the past—those learners who are gifted, but have one or more learning deficits as well. However, because they are some of the least well understood and most underserved in our gifted population, it is imperative that we keep coming back with important and new information to help serve them.

Linda Neumann leads off our feature section in her article, “The Goldilocks Question: How to Support Your 2e Child And Get It ‘Just Right.’” The article is directed primarily toward parents who face unique challenges in supporting their children, but it provides important information for educators as well. She includes a chart comparing typical characteristics of twice-exceptional children with mainstream gifted learners. Even well trained teachers of gifted students need to observe carefully to be aware of these differences and not mistake the 2e child as being lazy or unmotivated.

Neumann’s main theme is finding a balance between doing too much or too little for the child when running interference in school matters. She presents three case descriptions to provide examples of both. Please note also her sidebar, “Understanding the Second “e” in 2e” in which she points out some of the unwanted or negative ramifications that may result from the learning deficits 2e children face. Awareness is key for the adults in their lives.

I wish to thank Linda Neumann and J. Mark Bade, editors and publishers of 2e Newsletter, for allowing us to reprint the article that follows by Judy Willis, “Twice-exceptional Children, Exceptional Challenges—A Brain-based View.” We are learning so much from ongoing brain research and how we might use it to better support gifted learners. A major thing I gleaned from Willis’ paper is the detrimental effect of boredom. This is a negative issue for most gifted students, but is particularly so for 2e learners. According to Willis, when experiencing boredom, the amygdala sends input to the lower brain, not reaching the prefrontal (thinking) part of the brain, and in many ways, learning shuts down. Willis was a neurologist before becoming an educator and definitely has the credentials for discussing this very important topic.

Suki Wessling focuses on a specific but crucial aspect of parenting 2e children: the responsibility of introducing each 2e child to a new teacher (new to the child). Parents know their children best and if they can clue in a teacher regarding the child’s strengths and weaknesses it can make the difference between a successful school year or a disastrous one. She provides specific guidelines to go about this introduction. She also provides readers with an annotated list of sources she has found useful in her parenting experiences.

Our final feature article is directed primarily toward teachers and focuses on guidelines in developing appropriate curriculum for 2e learners. M. Elizabeth Nielsen & L. Dennis Higgins state,

It is essential to provide programs that follow what the students need. That “need” is [for 2e learners] often elusive and unattainable at first glance. But, once the “need” is determined educators immediately face a new set of challenges. The Guiding Principles for Curriculum Development for Twice-Exceptional Children is a starting point for program development—designed to allow school districts the flexibility of interpretation.

In their article, “Guiding Principles: Curriculum for Twice-Exceptional Learners,” Nielsen and Higgins share the principles they developed as part of two Jacob Javits grants they directed in the southwestern United States. It provides an organized and research-based method to approach curriculum development for 2e learners.

Please note also an extended review in the book review section devoted to assisted technology useful to 2e learners—technology that can be indispensable to these learners once they are made available to them. J Mark Bade reviews The Ultimate Guide to Assistive Technology in Special Education by Joan L. Green.

Happy 2013 to all, and good wishes for an outstanding year in your continuing efforts to support gifted learners.

—Margaret Gosfield, Acquisitions Editor
It’s that thing that happens every which way when we expect it, and when we don’t. Some changes are big, some small, but each and every human being on this planet (heck, probably for all creatures on all planets) has to be able to adapt to change. This editorial is my last as managing editor of the GEC and it’s going to be a tad different than my normal editorial. I’m going to talk about change. But first, I’d like to talk about this issue of the GEC for a moment. The focus of this issue is twice-exceptional (2e) children, an often misunderstood segment of the gifted population. We struggle to educate gifted children who are not twice exceptional so it’s not a surprise that we are often at even more of a loss with 2e children. In this issue Carolyn Cooper talks about Project High Hopes which took a group of special needs gifted students and had them participate in authentic problem-solving experiences within education. You’ll find the description of the dually differentiated curriculum informative and inspiring. The parent column alerts us to recognizing that 2-e does not mean low-e and this informative article reminds parents that they know their child best and may recognize their child’s gifts when school personnel do not:

Parents are the ones who can point out the limitations that exist when a child is assessed in a standardized way designed for most children, noting that such conditions may primarily highlight what the child cannot do. They can urge the school to provide alternative or additional ways of measuring the child’s ability and accomplishments.

In “Counseling Corner” Dan Peters asks, “How do we teach a child the coping skills he or she needs to manage life’s inevitable challenges and adversity?” A must read with some great tips for helping children cope. Dan’s words are the perfect segue into talking about coping with change. As I mentioned earlier, after this issue, I am stepping down from my role as managing editor of the GEC and my co-editor, Margaret Gosfield (acquisitions editor), is retiring.

CHANGE

Change, welcome and unwelcome, takes us out of our comfort zone and forces us to define ourselves just a little differently. All change brings anxiety even if it’s change we long for and work towards. But given the right tools and frame of mind change becomes opportunity. And really, why would we expect less of ourselves than we expect of our children? Children, within the educational system, are constantly faced with change. They start school, they move from elementary school to middle school, they get a new teacher, they grow, their friends change, they struggle, they triumph, they fall flat, and they get up again. If nothing else we should admire and emulate their resilience. In today’s digital, information-based society, everything is incredibly fast-paced. Sometimes changes come so fast and furious it’s hard to catch your breath. I marvel at the fact that when I wrote my first novel I used a typewriter and any editorial mistakes were laborious to change. Now, just like that, I write an article, cut and paste at will, research information, and make my living as an online writer—a job that wasn’t even heard of when I was growing up. The Gifted Education Communicator has already gone through substantial changes in the last few years. What once existed only in print can now be viewed online or with an iPad. And no doubt the future of the GEC will bring more exciting changes. The bottom line, change is everywhere, all the time. Why don’t we just roll with it then? Why does change really feel so hard? Why do young and old alike struggle with what is inevitable? I decided I wanted an answer to that question so I did a little research so I could come up with some tips for handling change—tips we can share with the gifted children we raise and teach, and tips we can all use ourselves.

CHANGE IS TRANSITION

If you think of transition as a place in and of itself then you can imagine that you are caught between where you were, and where you are going. This is disorienting. According to Psychology Today (www.psychologytoday.com/blog/worry-wise/201209/how-handle-change), there are roughly three stages to change and knowing which one you are in will help you get through it.

1. Resistance and Reaction This is the phase where you object to the change and compare the upcoming change to your old situation. You are not seeing opportunity, you’re judging.
2. Adjusting/Exploration In this stage you go beyond your initial feelings and begin to gather information on how to make this new thing work. You begin making choices and
WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE GIFTED EDUCATION COMMUNICATOR?

This is the final issue with Margaret Gosfield acting as acquisitions editor for the GEC. Take a look at her piece “What a Ride I’ve Had” in this issue of the GEC for a look back on some of her favorite moments.

As these upfront changes are occurring for the GEC, CAG has been hard at work behind the scenes to determine the best future course for this publication so that they can continue to provide the most usable and highest quality information for all of you. So whether you are an administrator, teacher, parent, or student, stay tuned for what’s coming next.

It has been my privilege and honor to work with Margaret on this publication for the last several years and I simply want to say, “Thank you, Margaret, you will be missed. We couldn't have done this without you.”

—Karen Daniels

Stephen Covey describes that successful people have a “space” between a stimulus and a response. This means that something happens and then the person thinks about how to deal with the situation and then react. People who exhibit emotional and behavioral regulation difficulty (of all ages) often have very little or no “space” between the stimulus (attempt to write) and response (meltdown). A major goal then is to help a child get some “space” between what he is facing and how he is going to respond to it.

So, as change happens, give yourself some space. How we handle life’s inevitable changes makes all the difference in enjoying life or feeling frustrated with it. I am going to miss being managing editor of the GEC. Particularly I want to thank CAG for having faith in my abilities to manage this outstanding publication and the GEC Editorial board for meetings that were never boring and in fact, were quite the intellectual joyride. Margaret Gosfield’s vision and guidance has helped build the GEC into something remarkable and no matter what changes come our way, my wish is that her legacy live on in one form or another. I fully support CAG and its mission and contributions to gifted education. As for myself, no matter what happens, I will always remain in giftedness and gifted education as a writer and proactive parent (you can see what I’m doing at www.giftedresource.com) who wants to help parents and teachers find the information to assist each gifted child get the help they need for an incredible education and fulfilling life. And remember, change happens. It’s the one thing you can count on. So let’s turn all those changes, big and small, into positive opportunities.

—Karen Daniels, Managing Editor
CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES

2013

FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 20–22, 2013
Arkansas Association for Gifted and Talented
Peabody Hotel, Little Rock, AR
www.agate-arkansas.org

FEBRUARY 4–5, 2013
Kentucky Association for Gifted Education
Marriott Griffin Gate, Lexington, KY
www.kagegifted.org

FEBRUARY 7–8, 2013
Arizona Association of Gifted & Talented
Black Canyon Conference Center, Phoenix, AZ
www.arizonagifted.org

FEBRUARY 15–17, 2013
California Association for the Gifted
Anaheim Marriott, Anaheim, CA
www.cagifted.org

FEBRUARY 28–MARCH 1, 2013
Nebraska Association for the Gifted
Embassy Suite Conference Center, Omaha
www.negifted.org

MARCH

MARCH 11–12, 2013
Georgia Association for Gifted Children
Classic Center, Athens, GA
www.gage.org

APRIL

APRIL 3–6, 2013
CEC Convention and Expo
Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio, TX
www.ccc.sped.org

APRIL 6, 2013
Florida Association of the Gifted
Tampa, FL
www.flagifted.org

APRIL 18–19, 2013
Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education
Robert Morris University and Holiday Inn, Pittsburgh, PA
www.giftedpage.org

JULY

JULY 8–12, 2013, WEEK 1; JULY 15–19, 2013, WEEK 2
Summer Institute on Academic Diversity
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
www.curry.virginia.edu

JULY 14–19, 2013
Confratute
University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT
www.gifted.uconn.edu/confratute

JULY 19–21, 2013
SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted)
Marriott World Center, Orlando, FL
www.Sengifted.org

JULY 24–26
CAG Summer Teacher Institute
Santa Barbara, CA
www.cagifted.org

AUGUST

AUGUST 7–9
CAG Summer Institute
Oceanside, CA
www.cagifted.org

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 17–18, 2013
Nueva School Gifted Learning Conference
Hillsborough, CA
www.innovativelearningconference.org

OCTOBER 24–25, 2013
New England Conference on Gifted and Talented Education
Portland, ME
www.necgt.org

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 6–10, 2013
National Association for Gifted Children
Indianapolis, IN
www.nagc.org

DECEMBER

DECEMBER 4–6, 2013
Texas Association for Gifted & Talented
Houston, TX
www.txgifted.org

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED
51ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE:
MAGIC OF THE MIND
February 15-17, 2013
Anaheim, CA

FEATURING:

CAROLYN CALLAHAN
University of Virginia

SALLY REIS
University of Connecticut

JOSEPH RENZULLI
University of Connecticut

For more details
and registration information,
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PARENTS—Come Out Of The Closet
2-e Should Not Mean Low-e (Low Expectations)

At the recent 2012 NAGC Annual Convention in Denver, we had the pleasure of meeting and talking at some length with Dr. Temple Grandin, who has a doctorate in animal science and who is a professor at Colorado State University. Dr. Grandin also is autistic (www.templegrandin.com). She was a keynote speaker to an overflow crowd at the convention, and she made a compelling presentation to highlight that in education and in the workplace, we very often set the bar far too low for bright, gifted children who also happen to have an accompanying disorder, such as Asperger’s (Grandin, 2012).

Authors Diane M. Kennedy and Rebecca S. Banks, in their excellent book Bright, Not Broken (2011), make a similar case that twice-exceptional children are being educated and treated by professionals who focus on their impairments, not on their potential. The educators and other professionals who work with these children are likely to have been trained in the diagnosis and treatment of a child’s disorder, but it is unlikely that they have received any training about developing exceptional talent. As a result, the focus generally is on the disability, not on the child’s abilities; these children often do not develop their talents because their disabilities are granted power over their abilities. These twice-exceptional (or 2e) children are also at risk for coming to see themselves as impaired, handicapped, and somehow as second-rate individuals.

Kennedy and Banks appropriately note that twice-exceptional is “a relatively recent term that refers to children who have dual ‘exceptionalities’—that is, exceptional gifts (creative, academic, intellectual, or physical abilities) along with a learning or developmental disability” (p. xv). To this, we would add that some children have other potentially handicapping conditions. They have hearing or vision problems or are orthopedically impaired and often are placed in special education settings that focus on the handicapping condition.

Though the term twice-exceptional is relatively new, experts have long noted that when a learning, developmental, or physical disability exists, there is substantial likelihood that a child’s intellectual and creative abilities may go unrecognized (Brody & Mills, 1997). Many gifted children who also have learning disabilities are missed or overlooked until about third or fourth grade (Kay, 2000); in our experience, they may be overlooked well into middle or high school. For example, a young child’s high intelligence may obscure a learning disability because the child can intellectually absorb the school material by simply listening and watching, as well as by using some astute guessing (Webb, Amend, Webb, Goerss, Beljan, & Olenchak, 2005).

Most of the literature on 2e children has focused on learning disabilities and gifted children’s asynchronous development; however, other types of 2e children (e.g., deaf, blind, physically impaired) share a common risk for lowered self-esteem, reduced intellectual challenge, and lower academic functioning. These children function considerably below the level possible, and they experience a loss of confidence and zest for school (Robinson & Olszewski-Kubilius, 1996). They feel a sense of frustration because they can do some things very well but other tasks not nearly as well, or because they cannot do tasks nearly as well as they can envision doing them in their minds.

Parent advocacy for these children becomes particularly important. Parents must recognize that having a label of a disability can hinder a child. They must ensure that expectations (both at school and at home) for that child are kept high, that excuses are not made for poor performance, and that a climate around the child does not evolve into one that focuses on what the child cannot do, rather than on what the child can do. Parents of 2e children find that they must advocate for their child far more than other parents must.

Parents know their child best; they may recognize their child’s gifts when school personnel do not. Parents are the ones who can point out the limitations that exist when a child is assessed in a standardized way designed for most children, noting that such conditions may primarily highlight what the child cannot do. They can urge the school to provide alternative or additional ways of measuring the child’s ability and accomplishments.

We encourage parents to adopt the focus of positive psychology (Reivich & Shatté, 2003), which contradicts the traditional emphasis on disability. Increasingly, psychologists and other professionals are recognizing that too much focus has been on potentially handicapping conditions.

Many famous men and women in history were not only bright, but also had disabilities and/or family or social environments that would, one would think, prevent them from developing their unusual abilities. Think about Temple Grandin learning to live with autism, or Helen Keller, who accomplished much despite being both blind and...
deaf. Think of Sir Richard Branson, who founded Virgin Records and Virgin Atlantic Airways, despite having a major learning disability, or King George VI, who had to overcome his stuttering.

Like Temple Grandin and authors Kennedy and Banks, among others, we believe that parents of 2e children need to come out of the closet. They must educate themselves about giftedness, as well as whatever accompanying disorder exists, and become aware of the constraints that so many systems have for such children. These well-informed parents must then—with patience and determination—insist that educational and occupational approaches for their child focus on remediating the disorder to the extent possible, teach compensatory skills where remediation is not possible, and throughout all of this maintain a focus at school and at home on the child’s abilities.

REFERENCES
Equity and Excellence
Twice-Exceptional Gifted Learners

The world of reality has its limits; the world of imagination is boundless. —Jean Jacques Rousseau

Not so many years ago, students with a learning disability (LD) were thought to be slow learners. Automatically placed in special education classes, these “LD students” were considered unable to progress beyond a minimal level of learning. Once placed in a class specifically for students with the LD label, many of these children were doomed to a tragically limited education.

In 1981 the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) produced Meeting the Needs of Gifted and Talented Students, six filmstrips to help teachers identify and serve gifted students. Some 65 statements in Part I alone spoke to gifted students’ characteristics and cautioned teachers about identifying and working with these bright youngsters.

While the “twice-exceptional” (2e) label hadn’t yet emerged in the 1980s, there was a hint, however, of what was to come. One example in filmstrip #1 read, “Many of their classmates have abilities that are equally remarkable, but less visible.” And the particularly critical statement that followed: “Far too many of them are never discovered” (p. 7).

Part II expanded on identifying gifted and talented students. “Giftedness,” it read, “can be especially difficult to recognize in certain populations...children considered ‘behavior problems’; handicapped students and highly creative students who give unusual responses, develop unique products, or offer unconventional solutions to problems” (p. 9). Of the 73 tips this filmstrip provided for teachers of gifted students, most addressed time-honored strategies of identifying students and techniques for serving them appropriately.

A hint of another potential shift in gifted education was embedded in one of CEC’s “Main Points to be Discussed”: It read, “Uneven development is very common among gifted children. It is unfair to expect a child with special ability to be uniformly superior” (p. 27). Reflecting on this statement from 1981, we now know it was a harbinger of good news. Today, traditional gifted students, along with learning-disabled gifted youngsters, are working side-by-side sharing their respective talents, which should have been the case all along.

WHY IDENTIFY GIFTED DISABLED STUDENTS?

Twice-exceptional gifted learners are not new to America’s schools, but their current designation—2e—is a relatively recent addition to the education lexicon.

Thanks to a three-year federal grant awarded to a team headed by Dr. Susan Baum, a highly-respected advocate for 2e students, Project HIGH HOPES was created several years ago. The special-needs students selected to participate in authentic problem-solving experiences were, according to their classroom teachers, “losers.” The disconnect between student interests and their abysmal school performance caught the team’s attention, resulting in its developing a dually-differentiated curriculum to meet their learning needs.

Students in our project were bright, as revealed by their responses to the Talent Discovery Assessment Process (TDAP) designed to measure potential talent in the arts and sciences for special needs students in grades 5 -8. The TDAP was based on research indicating that the most accurate prediction of potential talent would be observations of student behavior over time when the students were engaged in authentic activities within the domains of visual arts, dramatic arts, physical and life sciences, and engineering (Hokanson & Jospe, 1976; Baum, Emerick, Herman, and Dixon, 1989).

Talent discovery behaviors for performing arts included using body language effectively and creating elaborate movements, skits, or characters. Behaviors pertaining to the visual arts included students achieving balance in their artwork and creating unified designs relating parts to the whole and using appropriate inclusion/exclusion ratios.

Engineering talent was sought through student manipulation of materials; predicting outcomes; explaining the logic of alternative solutions; and finding how to overcome obstacles in solving problems.

The identification process comprised activities designed to elicit behaviors that would be observed and documented by content specialists in each domain for a period of 90 minutes (Baum, Owen, & Oreck, 1992). In addition, teams of two specially-selected observers—one knowledgeable in the arts; the other, in science—remained with the students for all eight sessions of the identification process.

Professionals in each talent discovery activity monitored closely every TDAP session, maintaining the learning environment required during students’ talent assessment. This step was essential for collecting each student’s quantitative and qualitative data for necessary analysis.

PROBLEMS ANTICIPATED

Predictable problems associated with special needs students extend beyond limited reading, math skills, and difficulty with spelling and handwriting for which alternate means must be sought to
access information, express ideas, and create products (Whitmore & Maker, 1985). Language deficits in verbal communication and conceptualization can be accommodated by visual and kinesthetic experiences to convey abstract ideas concretely.

As for gifted LD students’ typically poor organization? Visual assists, e.g., timelines, flow charts, and webbing, can help considerably. Interest-based authentic curriculum is key to solving problems that GT/LD students experience with sustained attention and focus.

The need of gifted students to identify with others of similar talents and interests often raises the issue of inappropriate social interaction often noted in special-needs students (Baum, Owen, & Dixon, 1991). A successful curricular accommodation is group identity based on talent or ability.

Gifted students also frequently demonstrate heightened sensitivity to failure, as those of us familiar with this population know well. This problem manifests itself among special needs students as both low self-efficacy and low self-esteem. The most effective curricular recommendation is something all of us need from time to time: recognition for accomplishment.

THE DUALLY-DIFFERENTIATED CURRICULUM

According to the students we were identifying, the testing sessions we administered were the most work they had done in at least two years, which they admitted to our team freely. Poor attendance reflected their intense dislike of school. Several students admitted that their limited skills in reading and math, difficulty with spelling and handwriting, poor organization, and several other problems continued to hamper their achievement more each year. These youngsters were going nowhere but pretended not to care.

Because of their severe difficulty within the traditional school setting, these special needs students, who were also bright, as we discovered during the talent discovery component, were eager to work with our Project HIGH HOPES team. Their parents, we learned also, couldn’t have been happier! A light was finally emerging from within a long, dark tunnel of despair.

Our dually-differentiated curriculum involved students in authentic activities designed to produce certain cognitive, affective, and creative behaviors characteristic of practicing professionals in each domain. Not playing, but learning in depth the various principles of each domain they were studying—with hands-on applications to reinforce their new knowledge—our 2e students discovered that learning could be enjoyable with the proper support.

These activities were not limited to one school, however; a summer HIGH HOPES program in Year 3 brought together students from several schools in which our talented specialists in each domain had been working with our students each week for the three years of the project. The summer program was a one-week, fast-paced, intensive program that challenged our students to work as they’d never done before.

The results of the week’s work were stunning! Our twice-exceptional students excelled in every respect. As the summer program’s director, I cannot list enough accolades to honor our many 2e students who eagerly gave up a week of their summer vacation to become first-hand investigators, studying every aspect of a real-life problem with the deteriorated pond on our program site.

They performed challenging tasks that required higher-level thinking skills including: meeting with state water department officials for advice on restoring the pond; learning art and drama techniques; and practicing for each talent area’s performance. This brought to a close an intense week of non-stop learning that these 2e students had never imagined. All of this and more was a gift to these very special students from themselves! As a result, students experiencing this authentic curriculum discovered both unprecedented successes as learners and a newfound respect for other gifted students, as well.

THE FINAL TAKE-AWAY: EMphasizing THE GIFT

Teachers of twice-exceptional (2e) gifted learners must emphasize the gift each student embodies. Although the daily challenges these students face in school often overwhelm them, teachers can help them become successful learners.

What’s the magic formula to help GT/LD (2e) students succeed? The answer is amazingly simple: Emphasize their gift.

The results of this essential strategy are both simple and effective because it

- lessens tension caused by dual exceptionalities
- strengthens confidence
- raises self-esteem
- increases other gifted students’ respect
- helps improve social interaction
- wins recognition for a valued accomplishment

By emphasizing the gift, 2e students find their true selves, which have been hiding for too long for fear of ridicule. The overall result is that students become successful learners—often, for the very first time in their lives!■

REFERENCES


CAROLYN R. COOPER, Ph.D., is a retired assistant superintendent and most recently served for several years as the specialist in gifted education with the Maryland State Department of Education. A seasoned district-level coordinator of gifted education in several school districts throughout America, she was active for many years in the National Association for Gifted Children and in state and regional organizations advocating for and supporting gifted and talented students.
As an advocate for gifted kids, my colleagues and I spend a considerable amount of time helping to explain the characteristics and needs of gifted children inside and outside of the classroom. We talk about the need for academic differentiation and acceleration, for these kids to be with intellectual and academic peers, and that these kids often have uneven development where some abilities are really advanced while others are not.

At the end of a recent talk I gave with some colleagues about meeting the needs of a vulnerable group of gifted kids—the twice-exceptional (2e), a gifted educator and advocate whom I have a lot of respect for asked a very important question. Her question went something like this, “At what point do we expect a gifted child to make an effort at his weak abilities and persevere through his challenges, rather than refusing or shutting down?”

In a conversation that continued after the talk, my colleague outlined experiences where she and her fellow teachers were making accommodations but the child just didn’t seem to make an effort. She further stated that accommodations can only do so much if the child isn’t invested in working on things.

Many in the field of gifted advocacy may respond defensively to my colleague’s statement, but since I knew her and her amazing work with gifted children, I knew she was asking a good question that deserved some thinking and answers. We know that gifted kids often have very high standards for themselves which some refer to as perfectionism. We also know that gifted kids expect to be strong in all areas of their performance and functioning as they are in their strength area, which is often very unrealistic. This is most often true for 2e kids who may be advanced in their reasoning abilities for example, and delayed in their writing abilities. There is tremendous frustration for the child who can speak in detail about the universe, but cannot put any of his thoughts into writing—one of the most common way schools assess learning. Thus, a very bright child with very high standards for himself, can feel stupid and ashamed.

In my experience, the child such as the one above will respond with either avoidance, refusal, “inappropriate” or acting out behavior, and often a combination of the these behaviors. So the question my colleague raised usually comes in the form of:

• How do we increase a gifted child’s persistence and resilience?
• How do we teach a child the coping skills he or she needs to manage life’s inevitable challenges and adversity?

This is a critical issue. Even if a gifted child is given appropriate differentiation and accommodation, he or she still needs to learn to persevere in the face of adversity, right?

**Coping Skills 101**

**Improve frustration tolerance (Lengthen the fuse).** The first key issue is that a gifted child often has limited frustration tolerance for his or her limitations and thus reacts quickly and
abruptly when faced with a challenge. In his book *The 8th Habit*, Stephen Covey describes that successful people have a “space” between a stimulus and a response. This means that something happens and then the person thinks about how to deal with the situation and then reacts. People who exhibit emotional and behavioral regulation difficulty (of all ages) often have very little or no “space” between the stimulus (attempt to write) and response (meltdown). A major goal then is to help a child get some “space” between what he is facing and how he is going to respond to it. When this occurs, the child has more time to think and problem-solve before getting upset and shutting down. The more space, the more opportunities for solutions.

**Teach them to use their great “thinking brain.”** It is important to highlight a child’s strong thinking abilities and help them to access his great “thinking brain” to figure out his “problem” or “challenge area.” Teaching children about “self-talk” and how our thoughts determine how we feel and act can be very useful. Help a child understand what his negative and defeating thoughts are. A client of mine with incredibly high standards and who experiences emotional meltdowns much more often than she and her parents would like, recently realized that her defeating thought is “If it’s not great, it’s not good enough.” Other common ones are “If I can’t get it right immediately, I am stupid” and “I am supposed to know (or be good) at everything.” Helping a child to uncover his negative thinking allows the opportunity to have more control over feelings and behavior by changing or editing this thinking. Some examples of more adaptive thinking may be, “This is hard for me: I don’t have to be good at everything,” “Good is OK,” or “Learning takes time.” When a child can change his thinking, it allows him to have more “space” between the stimulus and his response.

**Help form a realistic view of self and abilities.** Another issue is helping a child to have a realistic understanding of his or her abilities. Remember that the gifted child (and adult) usually has very high expectations for all that he or she does. This is not realistic and not helpful. Parents and teachers can help a gifted child learn about what he is good at, what he is “normal” at, and what areas are challenges for him. It is important that adults model these same “imperfections” and talk to the child about their challenges. Gifted kids love learning about adults’ past experiences and challenges. It often allows them to see that those they admire also have weaknesses. Highlight a child’s strengths in order to give him the courage to work on a weak area.

**Scaffold and support weaknesses.** Often the avoidant and acting out behavior comes in response to not knowing how to start. The idea of “scaffolding” is to provide a support structure while a child is learning an ability. This may include asking him questions about what he read in order to help him outline an essay, or sitting with him to help provide structure for concentration for his math assignments. Despite being advanced in some areas, many of these kids need the support for their weaker areas that one would give a younger child. It is the scaffolding that allows a tall building to be painted, and for struggling children to complete tasks they are currently unable to do on their own.

**Set up opportunities for success.** It takes a lot of courage for gifted children to do things that makes them feel “stupid” and inferior. It is important to set up the environment so they can take these chances in a private forum. Very bright kids who are used to being seen as the smart ones, do not want this image to be blown or exposed. As well, gifted kids who have learning and processing issues often become used to underachievement and “failing” and thus have little tolerance for doing more of it. This is often where the unfortunate but true age may come into play. “It is better to be bad, than stupid.”

Thus, it is critically important to set up opportunities for success. Remembering that success is reinforcing of effort and appropriate risk taking, and failure is reinforcing of avoidance and refusal, we must set up conditions where the child can get a “win.” Since gifted kids tend to have strong wills and ideas, it is often very helpful to include them in the plan. Help them understand the reason for, and importance of what you want to help them with, and ask them for ideas to increase the chances of success. Explain what others are doing to support them, and ask how they think they will be able to participate and try. For example, do they want to start with an outline, sentence, a paragraph, or power point? The key is getting children to “buy in” to the plan that will increase the possibility of a successful outcome.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Helping to increase persistence and resilience is critical for both teaching and parenting a gifted child. What good is it to have exceptional science abilities with a promising career in physics if you meltdown when you don’t agree with your professor or “refuse” to do what you are asked by your boss at a leading technology firm? While we must differentiate and accommodate for a gifted child’s strengths and weaknesses, we also must help him or her to manage challenges and adversity.

While understanding how difficult it is for them to feel stupid and inferior, we must help them build the coping skills to take risks, to fall down and get back up, and to keep coming back for more. As we all know, it is not the smartest who are most successful in our world, it is those who persevere, adapt, problem-solve, and don’t give up. Successful people understand what they are good at, what they aren’t, and how to solve problems as they arise—in short, they show resilience. While many gifted kids pose challenges in parenting and teaching, we must continue to try to help them grow—and not give up either.
A dozen plus years ago, CAG and I set out on a journey of creating and publishing a journal especially devoted to practitioners in gifted education—parents, classroom teachers, building principals, school counselors and psychologists—those individuals who are in direct contact with gifted learners on a daily basis. And what an adventure it has been.

Since this is the final issue for me as acquisitions editor of the Gifted Education Communicator (GEC), I ask readers’ indulgence in allowing me to reminisce a bit about these first 12 years of the GEC.

WHY THE NAME?

CAG’s journal went through an evolutionary process of development. In earlier years it was called simply the Communicator. In truth, at that time it was mostly a newsletter of timely events related to CAG with an occasional article by one of the organization’s leaders or a reprint article from a respected leader in the national field. Eventually the leadership determined we needed two separate publications—a newsletter and a professional journal covering timely as well as significant topics of interest in the larger field of gifted education. The Board of Directors determined that the newsletter would be named the “Intercom” with the understanding that it would come out between issues of the journal.

Much debate ensued as to what to call our new journal. I felt strongly that the words “gifted education” needed to be in the title; electronic searches were becoming common and I thought people could find us more easily with those key words. But ties to the past and a wish for continuity led to a fusion of terms; hence, Gifted Education Communicator, or GEC for short.

The first issue was distributed at the CAG conference in March of 2001. Conference goers received their copy of the journal in their bags at the registration desk, and the ceremony of unveiling the cover on stage at the opening session, marked the official beginning of our new journal. The cover featured a young Latino boy who had attended the CAG summer school in Santa Barbara the previous August; it also symbolized our intent to be inclusive in our coverage of issues related to all populations and issues of gifted children including: ethnic minorities, 2e learners, gender identity, highly gifted, as well as mainstream gifted.

SOME FIRSTS FOR GEC

From the beginning we determined that along with several ongoing columns relating to specific issues—e.g., parenting, technology, curriculum, and book reviews—each issue would be devoted to a specific topic, allowing us to cover it in depth through feature articles by invited authors. I never
regretted that decision and I think it led to development of addressing topics not typically covered in other journals in the field at the time.

The first such was published in Winter of 2002 and focused on “Gender Issues.” Of course we discussed the different needs of boys and girls in mainstream classes for gifted learners. But we also included challenges and needs of gay and lesbian students—something not talked about much in the public media at that time. Other firsts included the Summer 2007 issue developed to addressing challenges for building level administrators; and the Spring 2008 issue focused on the significance to learning and supporting gifted students by utilizing the results of brain research. Barbara Clark served as the guest editor of that issue and did a remarkable job of bringing the components together in a clear and presentable form.

OTHER ISSUES I AM PROUD OF

In Winter of 2004 we published, “Reversing Underachievement,” focusing on what many of us consider the most difficult of challenges in working with gifted learners. The public image of gifted learners as eager and joyous in their pursuit of knowledge and understanding just doesn’t fit all the individuals in our care. Articles by outstanding leaders in the field—Sylvia Rimm, Jim Delisle, Donna Ford, Del Siegle, and Susan Baum struck a chord with our readers. The reserve copies left after distributing the issue to our members and subscribers was quickly depleted and the issue became our first requiring a second printing.

“Equity & Excellence” came out in Winter of 2008 and also received wide readership and a second printing. This is a topic that we cover regularly and often, but this particular issue included feature articles by Paul Slocumb, Sandra Kaplan, Margie Kitano, Jaime Castalleno, and Thomas Hebert, and was particularly well received. The need to continually focus on this topic is unfortunate, but I am proud of the contributions GEC has made to help practitioners mitigate it.

The issue that brought the most honor and recognition was the Fall issue of 2008. In our planning, the Fall issue has always focused on a subject-area topic related to the classes in which gifted learners typically participate. That year we focused on “Visual & Performing Arts,” and a photograph of a gifted California ballet dancer graced the cover. Inside, mostly unknown authors shared their vision and experiences of successful opportunities for gifted students in the arts in a stunning array of opportunities. We submitted this issue to the American Association of Educational Publishers and it was named a “finalist” in their annual awards competition. The culmination came at the AEP conference in June in Washington, D.C.; while we didn’t receive the ultimate award, it was a thrill to sit in the meeting room of the Na-
Coming closer in time, I am also proud of our Spring 2012 issue, “Is It A Cheetah”? I have always been inspired by Stephanie Tolan’s essay of that title concerning the constrictions placed upon highly gifted children by their environment—especially at school. I think that all of us concerned in supporting gifted children wish to provide environments most conducive to their well-being and ability to excel. It has been the collective goal of the GEC staff in general to further such support and an effort that I hope to be remembered by in my tenure as editor of this journal.

THE ELECTRONIC AGE

Switching to electronic publishing has not been easy for me; I appreciate all the advantages that modern technology has brought to our world. But holding the journal in my hands as I read it is a pleasure in itself and one that I have been less than eager to give up. I was exceedingly happy that CAG brought on Karen Daniels with her expertise in electronic publishing to usher in GEC’s transition to an electronic format. In her capable hands, the process was made much more palatable, and the stage set for our journal to continue into the 21st Century.

I wish to express my appreciation not only to the CAG organization, but to the wonderful volunteer Associate Editors who have worked closely with me over the years including the current group: Barbara Clark, Beth Littrell, Dan Nelson, and Christine Hoehner.

So, with that, I turn in my GEC editor’s pen. But I’m not ready for a rocking chair yet. My new project is in keeping with my training and teaching as an historian; I am commencing a look back at the historical events surrounding a Chinese friend of mine as she and her family fled mainland China to Taiwan at the time of the Communist takeover in 1949. I hope it will become my first book-length effort as an author as opposed to an editor. Wish me luck!

And I wish continued success to the journal and the organization I have had the privilege to serve throughout these many years.

MARGARET GOSFIELD, M.A., taught U.S. History and World Cultures at Balboa Junior High School (later Middle School) in the 1970s and 80s in Ventura, California. She also served as an administrative coordinator of the district’s program for gifted and talented learners. She is a past president of the California Association for the Gifted and has been the editor of Gifted Education Communicator since its inception in 2001, and its precursor, the Communicator, since 1999. She lives in Santa Barbara, California. She can be reached at gosfield@cox.net.
Our mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of gifted children and youth by generating funds to support research and development, scholarships, and gifted education projects. All funds will be distributed to meet the goals of the foundation.

The Foundation generates funds to support:

- Research and development of Gifted Education curriculum
- Scholarships for students and teachers
- Classroom grants to encourage innovation
- Creation of an endowment to perpetuate the future of gifted education in the state of California
A twice-exceptional, or 2e, child is exceptional both for having high intellectual abilities and for having a learning disability or other learning challenge. Dyslexia, dysgraphia, visual or auditory processing disorder, Asperger Syndrome, anxiety, and attention deficit disorder are among the many examples of the second “e” that a 2e child may have. One thing that makes our twice-exceptional kids a puzzle to others—and even to us, their parents—is their inconsistency. Sometimes they seem to have it all together. At times they can follow instructions, meet a deadline, take responsibility, show restraint, and use good judgment. Other times they can’t. Sometimes they welcome our help; sometimes they don’t; and sometimes they become dependent on it. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges parents of twice-exceptional children face is giving our kids just enough support—finding that balance point between helping them to keep moving ahead and experiencing regular successes, and holding them back by doing too much and making them dependent on us. But how do we determine the level of support that’s not too little, not too much, but “just right”? How do we know when it’s time to pull back our support and let our kids take greater responsibility for themselves?

**THE NEED FOR SUPPORT**

There’s no single profile of a twice-exceptional child because both the child’s gifts and limitations can take many forms. We can, however, give a general description of these children. They display a combination of traits common to kids who are gifted and kids with learning disabilities or other learning deficits. The table on page 18 lists common traits in both categories.

A blending of characteristics such as these – for example, precocious use of language on the one hand and trouble organizing thoughts, writing legibly, and spelling on the other – is likely to set a child apart from others, even from other gifted children. As a result, navigating through life becomes more stressful and challenging for the 2e child, whose differences...
can make it hard to be accepted in school, to make friends, and to be understood by teachers. Feeling out of sync with peers and teachers can take an emotional toll, apparent in the anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem that many 2e children display. As parents see their once happy kids becoming increasingly stressed and discouraged, they feel the need to “run interference” for their 2e kids, to help them cope with situations and feelings the children don’t yet understand and aren’t yet able to handle on their own. Many of these parents feel obligated to explain their 2e children’s differences to others. The parents might also feel the need to protect their children from the opinions and judgments of those unable to see what’s hidden, whether it’s a child’s gifts or deficits. Furthermore, 2e children’s deficits tend to hamper their ability to perform tasks that classroom learning requires. Often, they need classroom accommodations (such as reduced homework or untimed tests) and modifications to the way in which content is presented (such as grade or content acceleration) to be successful. Because getting these in place and monitoring them for effectiveness is not always easy, their parents are likely to have a regular presence in the school lives of their 2e children.

As parents take on these support roles, nagging doubts can surface, especially when the parents hear “helpful” comments like, “Kids just have to learn that if they don’t do the work, they suffer the consequences.” Or “Maybe he should just tough it out. He’ll have a different teacher next year.” Or “You’ve got to let her fight her own battles.” Parents may wonder, is this advice right? Let’s look at some typical situations that parents of 2e kids face and see if the support the parents provide is too little, too much, or just right.

**Jacob**

Jacob, a very bright 12-year-old with Asperger Syndrome, has interests that are limited, but intense. He’s an expert on the major battles of the Civil War. He loves to read and talk about them, but his public school classmates aren’t interested. It’s hard for Jacob to take part in the conversations that go on around him in school, or even outside of school for that matter. He’s uncomfortable making eye contact and doesn’t know how to make small talk. He’s not very good at reading people’s expressions and gestures, and doesn’t understand their jokes.

Jacob’s mother knows how stressful it is for her son to be in social situations. Because she wants to help him avoid the discomfort and anxiety that his social shortcomings produce, she often serves as Jacob’s spokesperson. If someone asks Jacob a question, he looks to his mother, who either answers or prompts him to answer.

**Ava**

Ava is a gifted fifth-grade girl diagnosed with inattentive AD/HD. Weakness in executive functions makes it hard for her to plan, organize, and follow through with tasks, especially her schoolwork. Ava also has slow processing speed. She reads slowly and works slowly; and it can take her longer than other students to formulate an answer in response to a question.

Ava’s parents regularly get reports from school that Ava doesn’t follow directions, misses deadlines, and forgets to turn in assignments. The parents spend much of their time reminding Ava, helping her with schoolwork, driving forgotten things to school, interceding on her behalf, and asking the teacher to extend deadlines. Evenings at home are taken over by homework wars. Ava’s overwhelmed, often breaking into tears trying to get her work done. She has trouble sleeping and doesn’t want to go to school. Compounding the issue, the teacher doubts both Ava’s giftedness and her diagnosis. She sees the child as being lazy and choosing not to do her work; and she believes the parents are enabling Ava.

**Alex**

Diagnosed with AD/HD, Alex has always found it hard to keep still. He was recognized in his old school as a math and science whiz, and he loves doing hands-on projects.

Over the summer, Alex moved and started sixth grade in a new school. His old friends were used to him. They had all known that Alex was “hyper”—that he easily got carried away. If his friends were being rowdy, Alex was even rowdier. If they were being noisy, he was even noisier. At the new school, however, his classmates seemed put off by this behavior. In no time Alex found that his actions earned him a reputation as a troublemaker with the teachers and made him some enemies at school. Boys on the bus and playground began taunting him. A few times they knocked Alex’s books out of his hands and tussled with him. At first, Alex didn’t want to tell his parents because he knew they believed that kids should settle their own differences. Finally, as they saw Alex’s grades slipping and noticed that he seemed increasingly angry and sad, his parents asked the cause and he told them.

Alex’s mother and father called a meeting at the school, where the attitude seemed to be that this was just “boys being boys” and that Alex, after all, did bring it on himself with his “annoying” behavior. The advice from school was to encourage Alex to tone down his behavior and try harder to fit in with his new classmates. His parents thought that maybe the teachers were right, that this was a kids’ matter for Alex to work out.

**FINDING THE BALANCE POINT**

In each case, with Jacob, Ava, and Alex, the parents were doing what they thought, or at least hoped, was best for their 2e children. How successful were they in providing a level of support that was just right—that balance point between helping children progress and experience success, and holding them back by doing too much and making them dependent?

**Jacob**

It would seem that Jacob’s mother has crossed the line in terms of providing her son with an appropriate level of support. In wanting to spare Jacob distress, she’s unnecessarily shouldered the responsibility for his behavior in social settings. By doing this, parents can achieve the opposite of what they intend, hindering rather than helping their children. As Pamela Wright (2008) explains, “Overprotective parents unwittingly create chronic dependency and ‘learned help-
Typical Characteristics...

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<tr>
<th>...OF GIFTED CHILDREN</th>
<th>...OF TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Developmental asynchrony (uneven development – advanced cognitively but delayed in other areas such as in social/emotional and motor skills)</td>
<td>• Disorganized, often losing track of belongings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Highly developed curiosity</td>
<td>• Uneven academic pattern with extreme areas of both strength and weakness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Precocious development and use of language</td>
<td>• Trouble remembering to do or follow through with tasks and sticking to a schedule</td>
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<td>• Active imagination</td>
<td>• Poor sense of time and difficulty estimating the time needed to complete tasks</td>
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<td>• Tendency toward divergent (creative and unusual) thinking</td>
<td>• Difficulty performing multi-step instructions and performing tasks sequentially</td>
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<td>• Keen observation skills</td>
<td>• Slower to process language and respond than might be expected, based on their intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ability, from an early age, to remember large amounts of information</td>
<td>• Difficulty taking a systematic approach to problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unusual sense of humor</td>
<td>• Writing difficulties, including trouble organizing thoughts, writing legibly, and spelling</td>
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<td>• Advanced moral reasoning about issues related to fairness and justice</td>
<td>• Fear of embarrassment that leads to avoidance of risk taking in the classroom</td>
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<td>• High-level reasoning powers and problem-solving abilities</td>
<td>• May have narrowly focused interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Heightened sensitivities (referred to by psychiatrist/psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski as overexcitabilities) in these areas:</td>
<td>• May show less maturity than their age peers</td>
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  - Psychomotor |
  - Sensual |
  - Imaginational |
  - Intellectual |
  - Emotional |

Caring for the Mental Health of the Twice-Exceptional Child, 2011

lessness’ in their children – a mindset that will often persist throughout that individual’s life….These children grow up to be adults who believe that they ‘can’t’ do things.”

What other options might there be? Perhaps Jacob’s mother could look for other sources of support that would allow her to pull back and eventually let her son assume responsibility for his behavior. For example, it’s likely that Jacob has an Individual Education Program (IEP) at school. His mother could request that social skills training be added to the IEP. That way, instead of serving as Jacob’s spokesperson, she might just offer him opportunities to practice his new communication skills at home, encouraging him to make small talk with her.

Another possibility might be to brainstorm with teachers about ways to help Jacob connect with other students. By filling teachers in on Jacob’s strengths and interests, she can help teachers come up with ways to help her son make friends—perhaps through a history club or special history projects with others who share that interest.

Ava

Ava’s parents face a number of issues that demand their attention and action. The book Late, Lost, and Unprepared offers parents advice for how to help in situations like Ava’s: “Figuring out how to help begins with clearly and specifically defining the problems and deciding where to start (p. 75).”

The problems in Ava’s situation are:

• The effects of her executive function deficits and slow processing speed
• Ava’s heavy dependence on her parents to help her function at school
• Her emotional and physical distress
• A teacher with a negative attitude toward Ava and her parents due to the teacher’s lack of knowledge.

Where to begin? Author Barbara Probst provides a framework. “On the one side are things you do to make your child feel safe and cared for; on the other side are things you do to help him [or her] stretch, struggle, and grow (p. 168).”

To make Ava feel safe and cared for, her parents need to find ways to reduce her stress. In the short-term they might consider following this advice:

Parents need to concentrate on the job which is solely theirs. Namely: encouraging the growth of the whole
Understanding the Second “e” in 2e

Unlike other gifted children, those who are twice exceptional have deficits that can make it difficult to learn and perform well in the classroom. These deficits, which may not be easy to identify, can do the following:

• Interfere with a child’s ability to make sense of visual or auditory information
• Make it hard to correctly interpret social cues, like facial expressions and tone of voice
• Limit the functioning of short-term memory, making it hard to carry out multi-step instructions and complete sequential tasks
• Take the form of language-based disorders that make reading, writing, mathematics, or verbal expression difficult
• Appear as a mood disorder that leaves a child anxious or depressed
• Appear as an attention deficit that can make it hard to sit still, focus, and organize thoughts and materials
• Hamper fine motor skills, making handwriting laborious and difficult
• Hamper gross motor skills, making movement awkward and sports difficult
• Interfere with the brain’s ability to process sensory information, causing these children to react to the world quite differently from others.

Of course, it’s unlikely that any one child will display all of these characteristics. After all, 2e children are a diverse group; and their gifts and deficits can combine in many different ways.

by the eighth grade; and children with behavioral disorders, such as AD/HD, are almost 10 times more likely as others to be regularly bullied. (Council for Exceptional Children, n.d.) In determining what level of parental support is “just right” for Alex, the same considerations apply here as with Ava. The starting point, again, must be the child’s well-being. According to the article “What to Do if Your Child Is Being Bullied” (www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_What_Do_if_YourChildIsBeingBullied?), Alex would benefit greatly from learning more about bullying. Researchers have found that it’s not just a matter of “kids being kids.” Bullying stems from an imbalance of power between bully and victim, and it may not stop without adult intervention. Alex’s well-being also depends on the school providing a safe learning environment. His parents need to communicate their expectations that the bullying will stop and offer to work with the school to see that it does. They can play an important role by educating school personnel about twice exceptionality and the need to avoid placing the blame on the victim. Monitoring the school’s progress in dealing with this issue will also be important.

Next comes the support needed for Alex to “stretch, struggle, and grow.” Alex would benefit from learning to become more resilient to bullying. Some ways his parents can help him might be:

- Finding activities outside of school that build on Alex’s strengths and talents, helping him to feel confident and strong and, perhaps, to make new friends.
- Learning about strategies for handling bullying, talking to Alex about them, and even role-playing with him.
- Finding a counselor to work with Alex on learning what it takes to handle bullying and to make and keep friends.
- Making the same requests of the school that Jacob’s parents did to provide instruction in social skills and find ways to help Alex connect with other students through shared strengths and interests – for example, his love of math, science, and hands-on projects.

CONCLUSION

We’ve looked at three situations common to twice-exceptional children and their parents. From them, we can construct some guidelines to help parents determine just how much support to give their struggling twice-exceptional children:

- Focus on understanding the problem before looking for a solution.
- Educate yourself about the problem and the resources available for dealing with it.
- Develop your strategy, both short-term (making your child feel safe and cared for) and long-term (coming up with ways to help your child “stretch, struggle, and grow”).
- Reassess the support you give your child on a regular basis, pulling back as your child’s ability to handle the situation increases.

Two additions might be:

- Have patience. Recognize that it takes time for your child to learn new skills and develop new abilities. Psychologist Jean Peterson (2012) counsels adults not to despair because of what’s happening during one phase of a child’s life. It will take many years to see how it turns out.
- Take advantage of the experience of others. Seek help from professionals as well as from other parents who find themselves in a similar situation. Look to parent organizations or online discussion groups for parents of twice-exceptional kids.

Finding the right level of support doesn’t mean that your child won’t ever struggle or fail. Nor does it mean that your child will always be happy. Instead, it means supporting them just enough so that sometimes they succeed and other times they have what Madeline Levine (2012) describes as “successful failures,” failures that they can live with and that help them to grow.

REFERENCES


LINDA C. NEUMANN is the editor and co-publisher of 2e: Twice-Exceptional Newsletter (www.2eNewsletter.com), a bi-monthly electronic publication that focuses on twice-exceptional children – those who are gifted and have learning or attention difficulties. She is also the editor/author of the Spotlight on 2e Series, a series of publications that provide information on how to recognize and address the combination of giftedness and learning challenges in children.
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Marcy Cook, Marcy Cook Math
Hall Davidson, Discovery Education
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You can register for the whole day or for just the morning or afternoon.

Friday Morning: Demonstration Classrooms
Lessons that specifically define the basic concepts and strategies related to the implementation of the Common Core Standards for gifted and high ability learners will be demonstrated with elementary and middle school students by a Leadership Team of teachers trained and practiced in these Common Core Standard concepts and strategies.

Friday Afternoon: The emphasis on how to differentiate curriculum for gifted learners has often taken precedence over how to differentiate instruction for these students. A variety of instructional techniques and strategies designed specifically to complement the teaching and learning of the tenets of a differentiated curriculum will be demonstrated. Participants will be given the opportunity to become an apprentice during the session to actually practice the instructional strategies that have been demonstrated to them.

Exhibit Hall
Participants will have the opportunity to gather information on exciting and cutting-edge products and services relevant to your unique needs. The exhibit hall will have a large variety of booths with items of interest for parents and educators of gifted students. Take time to meet the vendors and see the valuable materials they have available. If you are interested in having an exhibit booth, registration forms are available at www.cagifted.org or you can request a form from cagoffice@aol.com. Advertising is also available in the CAG Conference program, contact cagoffice@aol.com for details.

Team Discount Available
Save $50 by coming as a team of 5 or more. Details on the CAG website.

Anaheim Marriott Hotel
700 W. Convention Center Way
Anaheim, CA 92802

Keynote Session
Saturday morning’s keynote session, “2020: Visions for the Future,” will feature Carolyn Callahan from the University of Virginia.

Workshops
There will be a big selection of workshops during each of 9 different time periods from Saturday at 7:45 am until Sunday at 1:30 pm. The presenters have been selected from hundreds of proposals submitted this year.

PATHWAY TO AH-AH
The “draft revisions” of the GATE Standards will be the focus of each of the presentations in these sessions. This year’s Pathway to Aha provides the distinct “stepping stones” from the past definitions of Acceleration, Depth, Complexity and Novelty to future understandings and implementation of these areas of differentiation.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS
Key concepts and skills that weave throughout the Common Core Standards will be demonstrated as the foundation to differentiate these standards for gifted students. Each session will emphasize one of these key concepts and skills within the context of subject matter across the disciplines and grade levels.

Parents at the Conference
Parents of gifted children are encouraged to attend the full conference as presentations of interest to parents are scheduled during ALL conference sessions. Parents can also choose to attend on Sunday only and join with all other conference attendees as we offer both the teacher and parent sessions simultaneously.

Silent Auction
California Foundation for Gifted Education will be holding a silent auction throughout the conference to raise money for scholarships, research and development, and educational projects. Be sure to stop by their booth in the exhibit hall. If you would like to donate an item for the auction, email Judith at judithr11@aol.com.

University Extension Credit
USC, UCI, and UCR will offer credit at a nominal fee for attending the CAG Conference and meeting the specified requirements. Details are available on the CAG website.

Disneyland
Discount tickets to Disneyland can be purchased on the CAG website.

Hotel Rooms
Reserve your hotel room for only $129 at the Anaheim Marriott Hotel online at the CAG website or you may call them directly at 877-622-3956.
As Calvin Coolidge once said, “The most common commodity in this country is unrealized potential.” Students currently in public high schools in large U.S. cities are more likely to drop out than ever before. When the reasons for dropping out are examined, almost 80 percent of the students report that the main problem is boredom. When asked what bores them most, the usual response is that the material they are taught is either uninteresting or irrelevant to their lives.

There are an estimated three million children in America who could be classified as gifted but are not recognized as such. Estimates of the percentage of drop-out students who are gifted range from 5 to 20 percent. The gifted students most at risk for falling through the widening cracks are twice-exceptional (2e) children.

The circumstances in today’s classrooms are such that stress is increased for all students and teachers. The consequences for twice-exceptional children include decreased identification, insufficient opportunity to connect with their gifts, and the misinterpretation of their behaviors. This article will describe the cycle of stress reactivity present in all of our brains that is a particularly limiting roadblock to twice-exceptional students.

**THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON THE BRAIN**

Most children experience stress when they encounter the overloaded, homogenized curriculum that dispenses facts to be memorized without providing experiences of discovery or opportunities to connect to content in the following ways:

- Through their strengths and interests
- By following their curiosity
- By using new learning to achieve personally valued goals.

Stress cuts off students’ access to higher-order thinking, logic, creative problem solving, and analytical judgment. Stress also renders students unable to reflect before reacting to situations or emotions. Instead, they respond with fight/flight/freeze reactions, which are not voluntary choices and often bring punitive consequences.

What takes place in the brain when we experience stress? The brain has evolved to promote our survival. Its first priority is to be alert for potential threats and to avoid them. The most primitive parts of the brain are those that determine what gets our attention and what information gets priority entry into the brain. This primary attention system, called the reticular activating system (RAS), is a series of long nerve pathways located in the brain stem.
From neuroimaging studies, we see that higher up from the brain stem is another filter that determines where incoming information is sent. This structure, the amygdala, is found on each side of the brain, deep in the network of the emotionally responsive limbic system. The function of the amygdala is to direct incoming information to one of two locations in the brain — either the higher, thinking, reflective brain (prefrontal cortex) or the lower, reactive, automatic brain. The destination of the information depends on the emotional state of the human (or animal) and the expectation of potential threat.

In the absence of high stress, fear, or perceived threat, the amygdala directs incoming information to the prefrontal cortex (PFC). There the information is further evaluated by the brain’s high-order thinking networks as to meaning and relationships to stored memories of previous experiences. The ability to evaluate one’s emotions before either responding to an emotional trigger or choosing to ignore it is a uniquely human trait. However, this reflective response can only take place if the overall emotional state of the individual is not in a high-stress mode, which blocks the flow of information to the PFC.

Unfortunately, the human amygdala cannot distinguish between real or imagined threats. Whenever the amygdala is highly activated by negative emotions, it sends incoming information to the lower, involuntary, quick-response brain, where the behavioral reactions are limited to the primitive fight/flight/freeze survival mechanisms.

This routing makes sense for survival when real threats exist because the lower brain is most efficient for automatic reactive responses. However, today, with most humans living in a much less precarious environment than we once did, we have far less need for this highly reactive system that evolved to protect us. Nevertheless, our brains still have the emotional response system that automatically reacts to the perception of threat as well as to other forms of emotional stress.

### STUDYING THE BRAIN IN ACTION

Through neuroimaging scans of the brain “in action,” we can see what influences the amygdala to go into the reactive mode that sends input to the low brain. For example, a study of adolescents evaluated how their amygdala responses varied when they looked at photographs of people with frowns or stern expressions versus when they looked at photographs of people with pleasant expressions. After viewing the photographs, both groups were given a series of 10 words and told to try to remember them. They were asked to push a button when one of these 10 words appeared in a series of 50 words that followed.

The subjects who saw photos of people with pleasant expressions had scans showing activation along neuron-to-neuron circuits from the amygdala to the PFC, and the subjects had increased activity in the PFC while they correctly identified a high percentage of the words. The subjects who performed the same word-recognition task after viewing a series of photos of faces with unpleasant expressions had very different brain activity when they tried to recognize the words. There was very high activity in the amygdala, and minimal activity in the PFC. Their word recall was significantly less than that of the control group.

Further studies of environmental influences that cause the amygdala to go into reactive mode reveal that this switching station does not just direct input to the lower brain during states of fear or anger, but also when the subjects experience significant or sustained boredom or frustration.

### THE TOLL OF BOREDOM AND FRUSTRATION

When the amygdala sends input to the lower brain, there are two prominent consequences:

- The behavioral output from the lower brain is involuntary, not mediated by judgment.
- Information routed to the lower brain fails to reach the prefrontal cortex.

In order for information such as classroom learning to be incorporated into conscious, retrievable, long-term memory and for the information to be processed with higher-order thinking, it must first reach the PFC. Once it does, the brain can use judgment, analysis, risk assessment, and planning to process the information so that learning becomes knowledge. The individual can reflect, evaluate options, and make conscious choices instead of involuntarily reacting to an emotional event or perception. For example, a dog may bark whenever someone knocks at the door, but the human prefrontal cortex, proportionally larger than that of any other animal, allows humans to reflect on the source of the knocking sound, identify the person there, and evaluate the best response.

Boredom and frustration are frequent intruders on brain function in today’s classrooms. Boredom can come from lessons that have little personal relevance, and from instruction and drills that cover information gifted students have already mastered. Frustration can result when students don’t immediately understand a lesson or feel they lack the capability to do so. When boredom and frustration persist or intensify, the
When “Behavior Problems” are not Evidence of “Brain Problems”

High-stakes testing has brought about changes in the classroom environment. I indirectly became aware of these changes ten years ago when there was an alarming increase in the number of children referred to my neurology practice. Teachers were concerned that their students might have neurological disorders causing symptoms that the teachers interpreted as AD/HD, oppositional-defiant disorder, petit-mal “staring and blinking” seizures, or obsessive-compulsive behavior.

When I evaluated these children, there was no higher incidence of these actual conditions than there had been previously — most of these children did not have neurological conditions. It was evident that something at school was promoting behaviors that were interpreted as coming from brain dysfunctions, even in children with very healthy brains.

I investigated classrooms and saw many children who did, indeed, demonstrate behaviors usually associated with these conditions. As I learned more about the changes in the learning environment, it was evident to me that these children’s brains were responding to stress by processing input and responding with behavioral output from their lower brains. I left my neurology practice to get a teaching credential and a master’s degree in education.

I became a schoolteacher and applied my neuroscience background to make bridges from neuroscience research to strategies that were most “neurological” with regard to the brain’s processing of emotions and information. I sought ways to lower students’ stress so that sensory input would reach their reflective brain, where students could evaluate intake and respond to experiences with their higher cognitive powers.

amygdala automatically shifts the direction of information flow and learning stops.

BEHAVIOR MISIDENTIFIED

Twice-exceptional children are often already exerting effort to manage their learning or attention challenges and to keep in check their highly-driven curiosity. When their amygdalas go into the stress-reactive state in response to boredom or frustration, these students are cut off from their greatest assets of intelligence; and their behavior output is limited to involuntary fight/flight/freeze. In this state, 2e students are less likely to make the best choices regarding behavior and attention.

If 2e children already carry a diagnosis of a learning or attention disability, their fight/flight/freezing reactions to boredom may be mistakenly attributed to their underlying conditions. Educators may limit their access to the appropriate interventions for their gifts because the students are presumed incapable of more challenging work. If boredom is prompting the stress reactions, denying these students challenge can exacerbate the problem. If these students achieve mastery of the information and must participate in the same instruction and drills as their classmates, they grow even more bored and stressed. The cycle worsens as they are denied opportunities to access their gifts and experience the joys of learning. The cracks continue to widen; and dropping out becomes a more and more appealing, even logical, option.

What happens when twice-exceptional children are properly identified and have access to appropriate levels of instruction? The “behavior problems” attributed to laziness, willfulness, learning disabilities, or attention disorders often diminish because their brains are not in the reactive state in response to the stress of boredom or frustration. Even twice-exceptional children with attention disorders or learning disabilities are more successful when they have learning experiences appropriate to their intelligence and gifts.

DEMANDS OF STANDARDIZED TESTING FAIL TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

The demands of high-stakes standardized testing affect most of what even the most dedicated teachers can and cannot do. For example, teachers today are:

• Less able to spend time observing the learning strengths and weaknesses of students, which could lead to the identification of twice-exceptional students
• Less able to plan and individualize the kinds of learning opportunities that would allow 2e students to connect with content through their strengths and remain engaged through appropriate levels of challenge
• Less likely to receive professional development that would allow them to better identify and serve twice-exceptional learners.
Uniformity of test modes and fact practice reward students who conform and do the drills without complaint, question, or curiosity. Twice-exceptional students, stressed by the oppressive uniformity of instruction geared toward memorization, are unable to work using their highest brains and unlikely to behave with conformity.

Reducing the variety of instructional experiences in order to increase “time on task” translates to more time spent on drills, class work, and memorizing facts for homework. Profoundly reduced are opportunities for physical activities, drama, art, collaborative group work, project- and inquiry-based learning, and opportunities to demonstrate exceptional creativity or higher-order thinking skills. Many computers in elementary schools that once were in continuous use are now rarely powered up because discovery and inquiry learning are not amenable to the time-on-task calculations.

This narrowing of the curriculum offers less opportunity for twice-exceptional and other gifted children to reveal their gifts and to be identified. The loss of time for science, social studies, foreign language, and the arts in elementary and particularly in middle school reduces the opportunity for 2e children to connect their curiosity, insight, and creativity with classroom experiences.

INTERVENTION

Teachers know the value of differentiation and individualization. However, they are not given the specialized professional development or graduate school instruction in the neuroscience of learning and the brain. Having access to this type of information and training would enable them, while working within the rigid instruction-time mandates, to help twice-exceptional children reach into their prefrontal cortex and connect with their highest potentials. The windows into the brain we now have through neuroimaging, electrical deep brain recording, and cognitive psychology provide valuable information for parents and teachers. This information can serve as a lifeline for twice-exceptional and gifted children to hold on to until the flaws and cracks in the system are repaired. ■

Editor’s Note* This article first appeared in the March, 2011, issue of 2e: Twice-Exceptional Newsletter (www.2eNewsletter.com) and is used here with the author’s permission.

JUDY WILLIS, M.D., M.Ed., has had careers as a neurologist; an educator at the elementary, middle school, and university levels; and as an author of books and articles. In addition, she presents at educational conferences and conducts professional development workshops nationally and internationally about classroom strategies correlated with neuroscience research. As a research consultant, she develops curriculum for teachers to use to implement mindful educational programs in their classrooms. The focus of her talks and writings is how to apply the results of neuroscience research to classroom learning. To learn more about her, visit her website: www.RADTeach.com.

Resources from Dr. Judy Willis

I spend time writing and speaking about how the brain responds to experience and emotion. I hope these activities will increase the ranks of well-informed adults needed not only to keep twice-exceptional children from falling through the cracks, but also to illuminate and guide these children to use the pathways leading to their brains’ highest functioning regions. For the knowledge that is power, I urge parents and teachers as well to learn more about how the brain processes information and emotions. This knowledge, that I was fortunate to acquire during my neurology training and experience, can help teachers and parents use “neuro-logical” strategies to support exceptional children.

To learn more, check out the following.

WEBSITE
www.radteach.com

BOOKS

Learning to Love Math: Teaching Strategies that Change Student Attitudes and Get Results, ASCD: 2010.
How Your Child Learns Best: Brain-Based Ways to Ignite Learning and Increase School Success, Sourcebooks: 2008.
Teaching the Brain to Read: Strategies for Improving Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension, ASCD: August, 2008.
Research-Based Strategies To Ignite Student Learning: Insights from a Neurologist/Classroom Teacher, ASCD: 2006 (Finalist for Distinguished Achievement Award for Educational Writing by the Association for Educational Publishers).

ARTICLES

“How to Teach Students About the Brain”: www.radteach.com/page1/page8/page44/page44.html

CHAPTER

Parents of gifted children have it hard enough; each time our children interact with a new adult—whether a teacher in school, a camp counselor, or a new violin teacher—we have to be prepared to train yet another adult in how to work with gifted children. Parents of twice-exceptional gifted children face an even higher barrier: Most teachers have never even heard of the term “twice-exceptional.” Not only will some of them have no training in giftedness, but most of them will believe that a child with learning differences cannot possibly be gifted at the same time.

The first challenge parents face, therefore, is whether to mention the word “gifted” at all. “Mention giftedness, and be mentally prepared for eye-rolling,” advises J. Marlow Schader, founder and executive director of the Asynchronous Scholars’ Fund (asynchronousscholars.org), “although there are definitely teachers out there who will respond with an open mind and intent to help.”

“Mentioning my child is gifted has never really helped,” says Linda Hickey, mom of a profoundly gifted six-year-old. “Even a teacher who was a developmental specialist and was the head teacher in a developmental preschool my son attended, and who claimed she has worked with lots of gifted kids, did not truly understand.”

Marta J. Matthews, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who works with families of gifted children in San Jose (martejmatthewsmft.com), suggests that it may be a matter of wording. “Teachers are less likely to be receptive to parents using terms like ‘gifted’ or ‘twice-exceptional’ or criticizing every fault their child has,” Matthews explains. “‘All or nothing’ descriptions tend to be a red flag for teachers that this parent is going to be a handful to deal with all year.”

Lyn Cavanaugh-Olson, GATE Coordinator for the Ajar Valley Unified School District in northern California, agrees that the starting place for parents should be to clarify their intent to support the teacher rather than to define their child and appear to predict failure. “Most teachers welcome insight into their students,” Cavanaugh-Olson says. “If parents approach the teacher not with demands but with information and support they will be doing their child a great service.”

Whether or not their training included giftedness, most teachers will likely have little understanding of twice-exceptionality. Linda C. Neumann, editor of 2e: Twice-Exceptional Newsletter (2enewsletter.com), says that parents need to be strong advocates for their 2e students. “Teachers may not realize that a student’s strengths are helping compensate for the deficits and that this compensation can use up a lot of the
child’s energy, making it hard to keep up a consistent level of performance,” Neumann explains. “If a teacher becomes aware of this situation right from the start, it can save the child from embarrassment, discouragement, and even worse, anxiety, depression, and loss of self-esteem.”

Offering information can backfire, however, if the parent implies that she believes the teacher is inexperienced, or gives an overwhelming amount of information that the teacher will not be able to use. Parents need to draw on the teacher’s previous experience, be good listeners, and offer information in a non-threatening manner. “Parents need to be respectful of the teacher’s time when sharing information,” Neumann advises. “Instead of saying, ‘You should read this book,’ or ‘You should read this 50-page report about my child,’ it’s better to provide the teacher with a brief summary of the situation and suggestions for accommodations and strategies.”

“Write out a short summary with the highlights of your child’s strengths and needs to share with your child’s teacher,” advises Matthews. “Bring the additional testing, grades and reports, but don’t lead with them. Ask your teacher about successful approaches they have used with kids who ‘love math but avoid spelling’ or ‘tend to distract others when they need more intellectual challenge.’”

When giving advice about working with a 2e child, try to stay very specific. A generalization like “too many options overwhelm him” will not necessarily result in the teacher changing his strategies; but a specific suggestion like “please assign him to a learning station rather than asking him to change his strategies; but a specific suggestion like “please offer a short summary of your child’s strengths and weaknesses. Do not overwhelm with information, but be prepared to offer a short summary of your child’s strengths and weaknesses.”

“Mention strategies you find helpful at home,” Schader suggests. “Provide fidgets and such similar assistive things from the start, if not against the rules.”

“Goal setting and organizational strategies are important for all students,” says Cavanaugh-Olson. “But most 2e’s need specific instruction and tools, so if parents can share past success in these areas, most teachers will be open to building on what has worked in the past.”

In acting as advocates for their children, parents will benefit by refocusing from the negatives of the past to the positives they hope will come from the new relationship. Lyn Cavanaugh-Olson says that parents she works with see greater success when they frame the discussion in the positive. “The concept of 2e may be foreign to some teachers,” she says. “So stressing the need to focus on the child’s strengths and compensation strategies will keep the conversation constructive.”

“Often, the strengths aren’t easily recognized,” Neumann explains. “2e children can appear to be uninterested, lazy, distracted, or disruptive; and their inconsistency can make it look to others as though they can achieve when they want to, but they don’t always want to.”

Schader, who developed “The Healthcare Providers’ Guide to Gifted Children” for the Gifted Homeschoolers’ Forum (giftedhomeschoolers.org/professionalresources.html), is in the process of creating a similar brochure for educators.

“Tell the teacher you are so happy to have them be able to help your child succeed, and that you’re willing to help in any way, and that you appreciate their support,” Schader suggests.

Teachers say that this approach completely changes their ability to work with students. Rebecca Hein, who teaches cello and wrote a memoir about raising her two profoundly gifted children (caseofbrilliance.wordpress.com), offers testimony that learning about a student’s learning disability made a huge difference in how she approached teaching.

“I had a young Suzuki student whose progress was quite slow for her age,” Hein remembers. “I had no idea why until the mother finally told me. It was much easier for me to work with her, knowing that she had this particular issue in her learning. I was grateful to have the information because it helped both me and this little girl.”

Cavanaugh-Olson has seen a lot of gifted students in her district suffer from their other exceptionalities. She reminds parents that 2e students need even more support after they have suffered difficulties in school.

“They often feel defeated about school because their deficits have defined them. Focusing on the whole child with the balance tipped toward their strengths is a good vision for parents and students to work toward.”

**CHECKLIST FOR A FIRST MEETING WITH A CHILD’S NEW TEACHER**

1. Set up a meeting to talk about your child’s learning needs.
2. Offer a short summary of your child’s strengths and weaknesses.
3. Do not overwhelm with information, but be prepared to offer other resources such as testing/diagnostic results, articles that define your child’s exceptionality, and suggestions for modified teaching strategies.
4. Be a good listener, and make it clear that you want to draw on the new teacher’s experience.
5. Offer specific advice that has worked in other classrooms.
6. Be your child’s advocate, focusing on success.
7. Offer strong support to your child.
8. Keep it brief.

Resources regarding twice-exceptional children and adults are changing daily as a result of new research, treatment options, and understanding of what comprises giftedness and learning disabilities. Hopefully some of the resources below will be helpful as you seek to understand your 2e children and students.

**BOOKS**

- This general guide helps parents navigate advocating for their gifted students in school, and offers advice on homeschooling when advocacy fails.

- This book is a general guide for parents and teachers on the educational needs of gifted children. It offers a basis for understanding the educational and emotional needs of gifted children, with some mentions of issues specific to twice-exceptional students.

- Because giftedness itself often leads to behaviors shared by such disabilities as ADHD and autism, this book is an important guide for parents and educators of the gifted. Misdiagnosis is common in gifted children because so few psychologists and therapists are trained to recognize the traits of giftedness separate from disorders that present similar behaviors.

- This is a straightforward guide to navigating the public and private school experience with a gifted, learning disabled child. The book includes information on a range of disabilities including Asperger’s, ADHD, Dyslexia, and social/emotional difficulties. Each chapter includes tips for educators, parents, and students, and is accompanied by helpful worksheets and guides for identifying and solving problems faced by students in school.

- This resource book useful for parents, teachers, and homeschoolers, offers focused advice for a variety of learning challenges. Rather than starting with the source of the disability (e.g. autism or ADHD), the book is organized by the educational needs themselves: difficulties with mathematics, writing, reading, spoken language, and social-emotional issues.

- This book addresses a wide range of learning difficulties that teachers may encounter in the general education classroom. Winebrenner addresses twice-exceptional students early in the book and emphasizes teaching to the strengths of all children, regardless of ability.

- This book aimed at educators presents detailed research about the characteristics and learning needs of twice-exceptional students in school. It offers concrete guides for identifying needs, selecting strategies, and developing a comprehensive plan for each student.

- Though the visual-spatial learning style is not defined as a disability, it can manifest itself as one when a VS learner is placed in an inappropriate educational environment. Silverman’s book offers tips for identifying, teaching, and parenting VS learners.

**WEBSITES**

- The Davidson Institute offers this enormous database of articles about all aspects of giftedness. On this page, take a look at the far right column to see the list of twice-exceptional topics that they have categorized: ADHD, Asperger’s/Autism, Asynchrony, Dyslexia/Dysgraphia, Learning Disabilities, and Sensory Integration. The breadth of this collection may seem daunting, but you can find unexpected gems here.

- Whether or not you homeschool your child, this resource page will point you to many organizations, websites, support groups, and books about your child’s spe-
specific disability.


- Hoagies’ offers their own comprehensive list of 2e resources, with links to websites, books, and magazines with a variety of approaches and target audiences.


- An online database of articles, webinars, and speeches on all topics of giftedness.

SPECIFIC ARTICLES AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD:


- Designed for educators, this detailed discussion of educating gifted children with Autism/Asperger Syndrome will be also helpful for parents who wish to offer specific tips to teachers working with their children.


- This article offers tips for parents and educators that can help students with a variety of exceptionalities succeed in a classroom setting.

NEWSLETTERS & MAGAZINES


- 2e offers a free semi-monthly e-mail briefing as well as a fee-based semi-monthly PDF newsletter. The magazine’s accessible articles are written by expert educators, psychologists, and others who work with gifted children with learning challenges. 2e also offers a series of Spotlight on 2e booklets, which cover a variety of issues of concern to parents and educators.


- This newsletter offers short articles on news, research, and support for parents and teachers of children with learning disabilities.

IN PERSON


- SENG groups are run by a facilitator (a parent, teacher, or counselor) who has been trained by SENG. This can be an excellent way to connect with local resources, including learning more about other parents’ experiences with your schools and teachers.

Local support groups: http://www.giftedhomeschoolers.org/giftedresourceelsewhere.html and http://www.hoagiesgifted-ed.org/on-line_support.htm#list.

- To find out more about resources in your local area, join local area gifted parenting groups. These lists may help you find one that suits your needs.

BOOKS FOR TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL KIDS


Free Spirit offers lively books written for kids on a variety of topics of interest to twice-exceptional learners: ADHD, autism, anxiety & fear, etiquette & manners, social skills, and more.


- For kids 10 and under, this book helps kids understand giftedness and why they may feel different from other kids.


- This is a general-use manual for gifted teens. It covers what giftedness is, how different gifted children's lives look, school, homeschool, college, and careers. There is a lot of good advice in the book, which encourages teens to see themselves as a full person rather than an IQ. The book also covers topics such as sexuality and depression.


- This touching book is short and to the point. Written for neuro-typical children who interact with kids with autism, it could also be used to help an autistic child understand better how others perceive him and what he can do to help them understand him. The book is most suitable for adolescents and teens.


- Rivero’s book is like an owner’s manual for the teen gifted brain. It presents teens with information on what intensity is and how to manage their emotional and social lives. It also helps teens learn about learning and how to become more self-directed in their studies.

WEBSITE FOR KIDS


- This fun, free newsletter features links to interesting articles that help children understand their brains.
Guiding Principles
Curriculum For Twice-Exceptional Learners
By M. Elizabeth Nielsen & L. Dennis Higgins

They said she would never read or write
And her struggles would keep me up at night
And I’m afraid that maybe they are right
But she’s so bright…
(from the song They Said She Would Never Read or Write, Higgins/Nielsen, 1989)

...found within classrooms across the country are gifted children who are remarkably creative and complex thinkers but who struggle with reading, writing, and/or social difficulties. These “twice-exceptional” children are a puzzle to teachers who struggle with how to best meet their distinctive needs. How do teachers modify their curriculum in order to accommodate the disabilities of these learners? Who is responsible for providing them with academic and social support? Are they best served in general education programs, gifted programs, special education programs, or combinations of these? What interventions are most effective?

The task of understanding the nature and needs of this very special population began immediately with the funding of the first grant. Based upon research findings, a number of curricular modifications were developed. Curricular modifications, or “Guiding Principles,” were developed and put into place in the classes that were established for the population of twice-exceptional students within a large school district located within the Southwestern part of the United States.
These ten Guiding Principles are presented below. An overview of each component is provided. Each explanation also describes how these components were used within the involved public and private schools and what was learned about students from their interactions and responses to these components. These components have become known as the “Guiding Principles of Curriculum Development for Twice-Exceptional Children” (Nielsen/Higgins, 2011).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In developing curriculum for twice-exceptional learners, the curriculum must offer:

TIME WITH TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL PEERS

Rationale: It is widely known that twice-exceptional students struggle with isolation (Traill, 2011). As a result, twice-exceptional students must experience space and time with other students who share the same characteristics. It is within this setting that twice-exceptional students discover they are not “the only one” with unique challenges or exceptional gifts. Once a student becomes acquainted with others who share the same life experiences, they are able to see that the challenges they have are not as disabling as first thought and possibly learn how to use their gifts to overcome these challenges. They soon discover it is OK to be a twice-exceptional learner and discover ways to help them understand who they are as people and techniques that will allow them to succeed.

What we did: We provided unique settings that allowed twice-exceptional students to be together during a portion of each school day. In some cases, we provided “self-contained” classrooms for students with a teacher who was specifically trained to understand the needs and nature of the population. Some of the daily experiences were in a structured academic setting and other experiences were in a semi-structured social setting.

What we learned: Twice-exceptional students were able to relax and “be who they are” when surrounded by other students who have had similar experiences and can talk about the challenges of being twice-exceptional students. They found life-long friends and frequently developed long-lasting loyalties to one another.

APPROPRIATE EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND COGNITIVE ACTIVITIES

Rationale: The emotions of twice-exceptional students can be their dominating characteristic. Their emotional disposition influences their social behavior and in turn has a direct impact on their cognitive functioning. These children often have feelings of anger, of worthlessness, and of failure (Reis, M.S., & Colbert, R., 2004). Teachers must provide an environment that will focus on the emotional well-being of these children.

What we did: We provided learning activities that encouraged students to explore and express their feelings about being twice-exceptional individuals. We taught a series of lessons we termed “Social Grammar” and encouraged students to explore their feelings and behaviors on a metacognitive level. Science lessons became an analogy for emotional responses to cases of bullying, negative interactions, and awkward interactions. In one case, a science lesson about stimulus/response found in lower animals served as a discussion about students’ personal actions and reactions (personal stimulus/response) to a variety of social situations.

What we learned: Once students were able to analyze behaviors on a scientific level, they were able to examine these behaviors on meta-cognitive and personal levels. As a result, they were able to make appropriate social adjustments to their responses to specific situations. They were able to use scientific language taken from the science lessons and apply this language to an immediate and personal situation. This positively changed the way these students approached and solved problems.

ADVANCED ORGANIZERS

Rationale: Twice-exceptional students love puzzles but not surprises. They have an expressed need to know what is planned on a daily basis. Providing an advanced organizer before a lesson is presented is one way to help students reduce the stress of the school day or even a school year (Mulueg and Cohen, date unknown). Organizers also allow students to show relationships across themes and ideas (Coleman, 2005). Once they have knowledge of pre-arranged school experiences on either a short-term or long-term basis, there is an increased acceptance level of what is planned. This “organized thinking” strategy is a positive intervention that helps students succeed within the school setting.

What we did: We routinely provided an advanced organizer for each school day and for each school year. We also developed a three-year advanced organizer for the curriculum in several of the schools involved with the project. The plans were presented in a graphic format that allowed students to examine the plans in a clear and concise manner.

What we learned: Students were better able to accept planned lessons and assignments once they gained a view of the immediate or long-term future. They were also able to provide input into their own learning. This made a positive difference in their attitudes toward school. They often expressed a sense of relief in knowing what was expected of them.

QUALITATIVELY-DIFFERENTIATED AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CURRICULA

Rationale: As is true with the general population of gifted students, twice-exceptional learners require a rigorous curriculum. Modifications in content, process, product and environment are required when designing curricula for the twice-exceptional population (Higgins, 2012). Twice-exceptional children often come into the classroom with a wealth of information. However, the information they bring to the classroom is often scattered and unorganized at best. Shaping the curricula around conceptual themes fortifies the ability for students to use the information through their strength areas. Appropriate evaluation of their limited products is critical to their academic success as is the physical and psychological atmosphere of the environment in which these students work.

What we did: We developed a physical environment that was safe and inviting. It was an area where children could work at their own pace and develop products that were appropriate for their learning styles and challenges. The environment was complex and included “hard and soft” areas with a variety of technologies designed to help students bypass their individual challenge areas. The curriculum was enriching, advanced, interdisciplinary, and challenging while at the same time accommodating to individual challenges.

What we learned: Students rose to the challenge when pre-
presented with abstract concepts and generalizations, higher-level thinking, and higher-level feeling activities. They were capable of developing unique products once appropriate modifications were put into place. They thrived when other twice-exceptional students were in the classroom and often encouraged each other to improve academic performance. The learning environment had a positive influence on individual success.

**STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY AND DISCOVERY**

**Rationale:** Twice-exceptional students often reject the rigid, “do-it-my-way” approach some teachers instill in the classroom. Instead, these students want to organize content in their own unique way and from their own perspective. Inductive thinking allows these students to organize their thoughts through their own classification system. However, it takes a teacher who is well trained and experienced in the inductive thinking teaching method. Once used with these students, their thinking and confidence increases and they begin to think for themselves.

**What we did:** We designed lessons and educational experiences based upon the Hilda Taba strategies of Concept Development and Interpretation of Data. We also used a powerful curriculum developed by Jerome Bruner. In addition, we incorporated a number of commercially developed, technology-based programs to the school day. We carefully connected all curriculum to state standards.

**What we learned:** Twice-exceptional students thrived on the opportunity to make real contributions to lessons that allowed them to share responses without fear that they would be unfairly judged or evaluated. They thrived on the opportunity to build upon their ideas over time and were eager to organize concepts from their unique perspectives.

**INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION IN CORE SUBJECTS**

**Rationale:** Depending on the exceptionality, twice-exceptional children exhibit a wide range of academic needs. Their Individual Education Plans (IEP) usually define what a teacher must address in terms of instruction. This typically means very diverse lesson plans for each child.

**What we did:** We provided a “folder-work system” for each child. Every Thursday morning, all academic assignments for the “work-week” were “published” in each student’s individual folder. Every child received academic assignments that matched their IEP driven requirements. All work became due the following Wednesday. With teacher supervision, students worked on their academic assignments individually and on their own time, completing work by the due date without the time pressures found in a traditional classroom.

**What we learned:** Gradually, students became more autonomous as they responded to assignments. Since they were able to “time manage” their work, they became less stressed about new assigned work. By re-structuring the beginning of the “work-week” to Thursday mornings, we changed the way students felt about and approached the school week. Parents consistently commented that this made home life so much easier and less stressful—especially weekends.

**RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES**

**Rationale:** Like all gifted children, twice-exceptional children need opportunities to research their passions. Given their characteristics of below average reading level, unorganized thinking, and limited ability to focus over time, this is often very difficult for them (Nielsen, 2005). They tend to struggle with the endurance needed to pull together long-term research projects and reports.

**What we did:** We continuously provided opportunities for research projects. We incorporated short- and long-term research assignments and encouraged the use of traditional and Internet sources. Students were encouraged to develop the skills needed to find appropriate facts that would allow them to complete a research project.

**What we learned:** This proved to be a very difficult requirement for students. Although they require the “big picture” in order to reduce levels of stress, they also have difficulty seeing what that “big picture” required while conducting research. In addition, because many of these students lacked the reading and required writing skills, they were unable to adequately find supporting facts for their study. They also lacked the motivation in many cases to complete the requirements for a research study. This is one modification that requires more study.

**AUTONOMOUS LEARNING**

**Rationale:** Betts and Knapp (1981) developed the Autonomous Learner Model (ALM) for students who were “disenchanted.” Quite possibly, many of these “disenchanted” students were twice-exceptional students before any widespread programming was developed to meet the needs of these students. The Autonomous Learner Model provides a mechanism to help these children who have a “fierce independence” and encourages them to accept the responsibility to develop their own direction in education.

**What we did:** Following the goals of the Autonomous Learner Model, we implemented a variety of activities that encouraged students to become independent and responsible for their own learning. Since the model is considered to be a three-year model, it fit well with those students who were in a self-contained program and on the three-year curriculum cycle. Our Folderwork system allowed for individualization of academic work and placed the due-dates in the hands of the students. Since New Mexico is rich in history we incorporated the “Adventure Trips” from Dimension One of the ALM model and provided a three-day, two-night camping trip to the ancient Anasazi site of Chaco Canyon, NM to study components of New Mexico history. In addition, the Autonomous Learner Model (ALM) license was implemented and became a strong motivator for students who wanted to achieve this high level of individual autonomy. An ALM License is a laminated card, much like a driver’s license, students earn by demonstrating responsibility in education. Once earned, the student carries the card and is allowed freedoms within the school setting. These freedoms included the ability to manage their own classroom modifications, design their own as-
signments, and have unlimited access to school facilities that are tied to assignments. Much like a drivers license, if these freedoms are abused the Autonomous Learner License can be suspended or revoked.

**What we learned:** Twice-exceptional students responded well to the freedoms provided by the Autonomous Learner Model not only because of the independence it promotes but also because of the social, emotional, and cognitive components contained and experienced within the curriculum.

**OPPORTUNITIES IN FUTURES STUDIES**

**Rationale:** Twice-Exceptional students often feel as though they don’t have a future. By incorporating “Educational Futures Studies” into the curricula, students received the message that they do have a certain amount of control on their personal future (Twice-Exceptional Dilemma, 2006). By incorporating futures studies and thinking into the classroom, students could analyze and accept rapid change encouraged by technological advancements and social trends.

**What we did:** Most enrichment activities had an Educational Futures Studies component tied to their objectives. We included the Future ME©, the Future Explorer, and the Seven Wonders of the Future World programs into the enrichment activities. We constantly asked students to “think like a futurist would think” by using trend analysis and trend extrapolation.

**What we learned:** Students were able to image and create positive futures if given the appropriate time and appropriate environmental setting. They began to feel better about themselves once they recognized that they do have a certain amount of control on their own futures. They were able to make better decisions and clearer choices for themselves.

**ANCILLARY SERVICES AND SUPPORT**

**Rationale:** Often, twice-exceptional students have several exceptionalities. This generally requires that the sponsoring teacher include other professionals involved within the student’s educational process. The coordination of educational experiences requires all parties involved to work together as a team in the best interest of the child.

**What we did:** We held numerous meetings with principals, teachers, parents, and other faculty. We directly involved the skills of other professionals from a variety of disciplines. These additional professionals provided services connected to the curriculum for these students, often working within the classroom setting.

**What we learned:** By including a team of professionals in the education of twice-exceptional children, we were better able to meet the needs of twice-exceptional children. We also expanded the understanding of the emotional, social and cognitive needs of twice-exceptional children throughout the field.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Providing an appropriate educational program for twice-exceptional special-needs children requires the use of unique modification and the work of many professionals within the field of education. No one can do this alone. It is essential to provide programs that follow what the students need. That “need” is often elusive and unattainable at first glance. But, once the “need” is determined, educators immediately face a new set of challenges. The “Guiding Principles for Curriculum Development for Twice-Exceptional Children” is a starting point for program development – designed to allow school districts the flexibility of interpretation. What worked in our schools in the Southwestern part of the United States may not work as well in other settings. It is important that each school district explore the local resources and existing mission statement to see how best to serve the twice-exceptional student. That will help create a “real future” for these wonderful students. ■

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L. Dennis Higgins, Ed.D., worked directly with students officially identified as twice-exceptional by the Albuquerque Public School System from 1988 until his retirement in 2010. He has authored articles and book chapters concerning twice-exceptional children. He has been a keynote speaker at national and international conferences. He was a consultant for The Twice-Exceptional Dilemma, published jointly by the National Education Association and the National Association for Gifted Children; a featured educator on the PBS Special “Reading Rockets: A Chance to Read”; and a recipient of the “New Mexico Golden Apple Award.” Upon his retirement, he was recognized by the New Mexico House of Representatives on the floor of the State Capital in Santa Fe, NM for his contributions to education in New Mexico.

M. Elizabeth Nielsen, Ph.D., was an Associate Professor of Special Education at the University of New Mexico until her retirement in 2012. She served as a UNM College of Education Assistant Dean for Research and is the recipient of the Burlington Foundation Faculty Achievement Award for Excellence in Teaching. She was the principal investigator for two university and public school district collaborative projects focused on gifted students with disabilities. These research initiatives were funded by the U.S. Department of Education as part of the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Grants. She has published articles and textbook chapters regarding these twice-exceptional students and has been a keynote speaker at national and international conferences. Her Ph.D. is in Educational Psychology from Purdue University.
Twice-Exceptional Gifted Students
CAG Position Paper

The California Association for the Gifted (CAG) periodically publishes position papers that deal with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. All position papers approved by the CAG Board of Directors are consistent with the organization’s philosophy and mission, and the current research in the field. The position papers support the organization’s belief in the value and uniqueness of all individuals, its respect for diversity present in our society, and its commitment to honoring the similarities and differences among all students. CAG encourages the provision of educational opportunities that are appropriate to challenge and nurture the growth of each child’s potential. The organization is especially mindful of the need for advocacy for individuals who have developed or show the promise of developing intellectual abilities and talents at high levels.

Twice-exceptional students have characteristics that are often misunderstood or misinterpreted. While they may be capable of high levels of abstract and critical thinking, an underlying disability can mask their giftedness making it difficult to identify and serve. The disability may come in many forms: learning disabilities, such as problems with attention, judgment, or social-emotional regulation; physical restrictions; or perceptual deficits, including deafness or visual impairment.

One of the greatest hurdles facing twice-exceptional students is the presumption that they should be limited to one label. Often, the disability becomes the focus of the child’s educational experience, because it stands in the way of reaching proficiency on grade-level standards. When this happens, the student’s giftedness may go unserved, and eventually regress to the point that it is no longer identifiable.

Another obstacle for these students is the difficulty of identifying either exceptionality because they may mask each other. Gifted and high ability learners who have social, behavioral, or cognitive disabilities may sometimes learn coping strategies that allow them to perform like average learners. Teachers may feel that students cannot possibly be gifted if they do not easily accomplish grade-level tasks. These preconceptions of students with learning or behavioral disorders or physical disabilities, coupled with misunderstandings and inappropriate stereotypes regarding giftedness, prevent some students from being considered for either Special Education or Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs. Left unidentified, the disability often progresses while the giftedness may regress. The longer students go without support in both exceptionalities, the less likely it is that they will develop their full potential.

In addition to the problem of overlooking the dual-diagnosis of gifted students with disabilities, schools often misdiagnose gifted students who have high, uncontrolled energy levels and incessant questions. Our brightest, most creative students might be behaviorally modified or medicated to change their unique way of perceiving and shaping the world, and the gift is lost.

With appropriate dual-diagnosis of giftedness and cognitive, emotional, behavioral, or physical disabilities, educators and family members can make educational modifications that can minimize the affect of the disability while allowing the giftedness to grow and thrive.

In order to maximize the student’s potential, educators and parents need to create safety nets that might include the following:

- training for parents, and educators, including administrators and counselors in the characteristics of, and appropriate interventions for giftedness and the disability both at home and school
- class schedules that allow these students to be placed in supportive, healthy environments with teachers who will attend to all of the student’s special needs
- assistive technologies that allow the students to express their ideas
- individualized learning plans that address the cognitive potential that goes beyond setting goals for grade-level proficiency
- collaboration and coordination between the GATE resource specialists and other case workers, including counselors, occupational therapists, and special education staff to be sure that the student’s giftedness is supported
- articulation between elementary and middle schools, and middle and high schools to ensure smooth transition and the continuance of strategies that work
- regional expertise, for example school, district, county and state resources and experts in the field when a school has little experience with the twice-exceptional student.

Ignoring or mis-diagnosing giftedness in students with cognitive, behavioral, or physical disabilities may result in the loss of potential and the perpetuation or exacerbation of the disability. Eventually, the student may become disengaged from the school experience, rebel, and regress. To ensure appropriate growth and development, classroom structure and content must be characterized by flexibility, challenge, and appropriate modifications. Parents and teachers must approach the student’s cognitive potential and consider the student’s giftedness when making remediation plans and intervention strategies.

The California Association for the Gifted supports the appropriate diagnosis and educational planning for both the remediation of disability and the development of giftedness for students who need intervention for two or more exceptionalities. The giftedness of the students must be considered as families and educators create learning plans and interventions for the twice-exceptional student’s future growth and development.

REFERENCES
The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) periodically issues policy statements dealing with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. Policy statements represent the official convictions of the organization.

All policy statements approved by the NAGC Board of Directors are consistent with the organization’s belief that education in a democracy must respect the uniqueness of all individuals, the broad range of cultural diversity present in our society, and the similarities and differences in learning characteristics that can be found within any group of students. NAGC is fully committed to national goals that advocate both excellence and equity for all students, and we believe that the best way to achieve these goals is through differentiated educational opportunities, resources, and encouragement for all students.

Due to a specific learning disability, an increasing number of students are not achieving up to their potential despite the fact that they demonstrate high ability or gifted behavior. These students exhibit characteristics of both exceptionalities: giftedness and learning disabilities. Their gifted behaviors often include keen interests, high levels of creativity, superior abilities in abstract thinking, and problem-solving prowess. Similar to their peers with learning disabilities, they frequently display problems in one or more of the following: reading, writing, mathematics, memory, organization, or sustaining attention. Because of their dual set of seemingly contradictory characteristics, gifted learning-disabled students may develop feelings of depression and inadequacy and consequently may demonstrate acting-out behaviors to disguise their feelings of low self-esteem and diminished academic self-efficacy.

NAGC recognizes three types of students who could be identified as gifted learning disabled: (1) identified gifted students who have subtle learning disabilities, (2) students with a learning disability but whose gift has not been identified, and (3) unidentified students whose gifts and disabilities may be masked by average school achievement. School policies concerning identification and entitlement to specialized educational services can contribute to the under identification and inappropriate programming for these youngsters. Given that gifted learning disabled students do not necessarily perform below grade level, discrepancy analysis should be based on their potential compared to their classroom performance. Student assessment must include consideration for the time these youth require to complete tasks; the support needed from others to complete each task; and the level at which the student can fairly be predicted to achieve based on measures of potential.

Identifying students’ abilities and gifts should be based neither on classroom performance nor on total test scores in achievement or intelligence. Rather, to identify students’ gifts, schools should analyze individual subtest scores and patterns on tests of intelligence as well as emphasize authentic assessment of talent within specific domains using student products, auditions, and interviews.

Students who have both gifts and learning disabilities require a dually differentiated program: one that nurtures their gifts and talents while accommodating for learning weaknesses. Being dually classified is often key to students’ receiving appropriate services. A comprehensive program will include: provisions for the identification and the development of talent; a learning environment that values diversity and individual talents in all domains; educational support that develops compensatory strategies including the appropriate use of technology; and school-based counseling to enhance students’ ability to cope with their mix of talents and disabilities. Without appropriate identification and services, the gifts of these students may never be developed.
Growing Up Gifted: Developing Potential of Children at School and Home (8th ed.)

By Barbara Clark  
(2013) Pearson Education  

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINE HOEHNER

Every there was a book perfectly written for increasing the understanding of intellectually gifted people, this is it! The definitive text, Barbara Clark has included much of the most current brain research, especially as it applies to education. She has bulleted all new information for those of us who have used her other editions. This new edition, once again, is totally user friendly. I used the former editions when I was a parent, and I found them highly responsive and gender sensitive, and she included a chapter on the underachieving individual as well as the twice exceptional (those gifted with a learning disability).

Part Three is designed for educators but can also be useful to inform parents on the kind of school structure they might expect. This section explores classroom structures and how to modify them for enrichment, acceleration, and for grouping. Educational models from Bloom, Gardner, Sternberg, Renzulli are included here. The various types of classroom organization (regular, special, individualized) and a wonderful composite of programs for middle and high school students will interest all teachers.

The final chapter in Part Three, Chapter 10 is no less important than any of the 9 preceding chapters. It is also one of my personal favorites: the qualities of the teachers of gifted students. This chapter should be in the hand of every administrator interviewing candidates to teach bright students. Having the opportunity to work incredibly hard and the pleasure of seeing gifted individuals go light years above “the bar” should not go to just any teacher but to one who has the personal and professional behaviors Clark lists (p.350-51). Teachers, in my opinion, who have these bright, creative, quick, reasonable thinkers are enormously lucky! Those professionals are duty bound to work extra hard, because they have the honor of guiding the processes of these prolific thinkers. I had that “difficult pleasure” for 25 years! How lucky I was!

Dr. Barbara Clark, in her eighth edition of Growing Up Gifted, could not have written a book more needed, more essential, more useful for parents and educators—for everyone and anyone who finds joy in working with a bright child.

Part One, Chapter 3 is critical—especially for parents. Many, many parents and teachers came asking me to provide in-service on the social-emotional growth and intelligence of their child. Gifted kids can act very differently from their non-gifted classmates and this is naturally a concern for their parents who want them “to fit.” That bright children must have support for their self esteem and moral development from parents, friends, teachers, other school personnel and society, is thoroughly discussed in this chapter.

Can giftedness really be developed? Part One, Chapter 2 underscores the importance of family. This is my favorite chapter to show parents who are truly befuddled by some of the actions of their gifted children. Clark has neatly organized graphics, like The Universe of Intelligence (pictured on p. 15) and the differentiating characteristics for each quadrant in this figure. She gives examples of what the child needs and, further, (again, for each characteristic) the possible concomitant problems (p. 47). With permission, I copied this section over and over and discussed it with parent groups. What a relief for many who thought their child just a little precocious. Having taught for many years in a Highly Gifted Magnet (LAUSD), I was especially pleased to read a discussion of profoundly gifted individuals. Often extreme thinkers, highly gifted children can be vastly misunderstood. Being bright or profoundly bright has a great deal to do with being nurtured, and Chapter 2 gives great support for early learning experiences and special environments.

Dr. Clark is an amazing researcher and writer! Part Two: Educating the Gifted Learners, provides clear, concise information and ideas on recognizing giftedness, being culturally responsive and gender sensitive, and she includes a chapter on the underachieving individual as well as the twice exceptional (those gifted with a learning disability).

Christine Hoehner is Associate Editor for Book Reviews for the Gifted Education Communicator. She is retired from the Glendale Unified School District gifted program in southern California and can be reached at chrishoehner@yahoo.com.
Take Control of Dyslexia & Other Reading Difficulties

By Jennifer Engel Fisher and Janet Price  
(2011) Prufrock Press  
Paperback, $16.95, 144 pp.  

REVIEWED BY KATHY ALEXANDER

In Take Control of Dyslexia by Fisher and Price, the authors talk to students about the process of reading and learning, the problems some students have with reading, and how students can help themselves reduce the difficulties that make reading challenging. Using language appropriate for students ages ten to eighteen, Fisher and Price make complex information accessible to adolescent readers. But even though the book is written to students, it also provides helpful information for teachers and parents to understand the frustrations and struggles of children who are dyslexic or who have other reading difficulties.

Fisher and Price explain the reading process and the “elements of reading” in very understandable language. They give a clear, concise explanation of phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. This information can be very helpful to both children and adults who want to better understand what actually occurs when we read.

In the second chapter, “What is a Reading Disability,” the authors discuss dyslexia and other reading difficulties. They make it clear to the reader that these disorders are not caused by laziness or lack of intelligence, but are neurological in nature; people are frequently born with them. They also reiterate that reading difficulties do not mean low intelligence; many highly successful people (da Vinci, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Cher, Walt Disney) have been identified as having dyslexia.

Fisher and Price wrote this book for secondary level students (grades 7-12) to help them better understand their reading difficulties. The authors explain how the students can become more cognitively aware of their personal reading problems and show them how to advocate for themselves. The book would also be helpful for upper elementary students, but more adult support would be necessary to fully understand the information.

This book would be helpful to all students with reading problems because it gives them a solid understanding of how people read, and with that understanding, they can better plan how to reduce or overcome their own reading difficulties.

KATHY ALEXANDER has been teaching at the middle school level in Santa Rosa, CA for seventeen years. She has her Master’s in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, and she is focused on embedding critical thinking and metacognitive awareness into all aspects of the daily curriculum in her thesis. She regularly works with her students to help them understand what is going on in their mind as their process information.

The Ultimate Guide to Assistive Technology in Special Education

By Joan L. Green  
2011, Prufrock Press  
Paperback, $39.95, 221 pp.  
(also available in electronic formats)  
ISBN-10: 1593637195

REVIEWED BY J. MARK BADE

This article was reprinted with permission from the January, 2012, issue of 2e: Twice-Exceptional Newsletter (www.2eNewsletter.com).

Joan L. Green must be something of a pack rat when it comes to gathering information about hardware and software useful in assistive technology. (Chapter 2, on benefits, is available online at the Prufrock website.) Those are followed by seven chapters covering A.T. that can help with specific challenges:

- Verbal expression (two chapters)
- Auditory comprehension
- Reading comprehension
- Reading skills
- Written expression
- Cognition, learning, and memory
The book concludes with chapters on games and online activities; Internet communication and learning tools; and adapted e-mail, search engines, and browsers.

**A SAMPLE CHAPTER**

A look at a sample chapter gives a good idea of Green’s approach in her book. The chapter “Treatment and Technology to Improve Written Expression” opens by identifying when written expression may be a problem—for example, in those with LDs, strokes, or other cognitive challenges. Green then lists the skills involved in written expression and suggests that low-tech options such as pencil grips be considered as well as high-tech. After stressing why written writing skills are important, she then presents strategies and resources to improve writing, starting with software and apps for drill-and-practice.

For each of 16 drill-and-practice writing A.T. apps, the chapter provides the app name, platform (Apple, Window, etc), price, and bullet-point descriptions of the features of the app. Here’s an example:

**STORY PATCH**

By Haywoodsoft
http://storypatch.com
- Apple app, $4.99
- This is a story creator designed with the goal of helping kids create stories on their own or with the help of a template.
  - The user first titles the story, then selects a theme such as “a trip to the zoo” or builds his story independently.
  - If the templates are used, questions are presented with possible answers and the user selects her response to create a unique story.
  - There is an image library with more than 800 images grouped into 47 categories to create settings for each page.
  - A character designer or personal pictures can be used to create the characters in the story.

The chapter continues with sections on:
- Software to improve spelling
- Word processors as a way to help the writing process
- Picture-based and talking word processors
- Word prediction programs
- Dictionaries
- Graphic organizers
- Technology to help with the physical aspect of writing and typing
- Speech-to-text and voice recognition
- Additional tools to help with written expression.

All in all, the chapter covers over 70 tools.

**PUTTING A.T. TO WORK**

Realizing that a book captures technology as it is at a particular moment in time, Green describes her book as a starting point, recommending that readers visit the websites cited within the book for up-to-date information. Green also offers an e-newsletter and a couple websites which can help keep aspiring A.T. consumers current.

Green also notes that obtaining professional guidance may be desirable depending on the condition being addressed.

This book is likely to prove to be a useful starting point for many parents and educators of twice-exceptional children in the search for resources to help those children overcome their challenges and reach their potential.
Gifted Education Communicator, the online journal of the California Association for the Gifted is published four-times per year: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. Gifted Education Communicator features articles and columns by nationally known leaders in the field of gifted education. The GEC is produced as an 8.5x11 layout in both flash and pdf formats. Mechanical Specs: Submit art/copy as file or on disk in appropriate online formatting.

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Ten Reasons why you should be a Member of the California Association for the Gifted:

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2. Your membership supports research and development, books, position papers, and other resources focusing on issues, policies, and practices that impact the education of gifted and talented students.

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