

GIFTED & TALENTED

SPRING 2020 | BRIEF 3

WHO IS THIS LEARNER?

The term “twice-exceptional,” also referred to as “2e,” is used to describe gifted children who have the potential for high achievement and have one or more disabilities. These disabilities may include specific learning disabilities (SpLD), speech and language disorders, emotional/behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, autism spectrum or other impairments, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Twice-exceptional children often face difficulty in the school environment due to classroom organization opportunities to participate and have a voice and choice in their learning. They can be highly creative, artistic and natural leaders. They may also have strong problem-solving abilities and a wide range of interests or a single, all-consuming expertise. However, at school, they may have difficulty keeping up with course rigor, volume and demands--resulting in inconsistent academic performance, frustration, difficulties with written expression and labels such as lazy, unmotivated, and underachiever. All these conditions may hinder their engagement in school and be detrimental to their self-efficacy, self-confidence and motivation.

WHY IT MATTERS

Like other gifted learners, 2e students are knowledgeable and talented in at least one domain. However, their giftedness is often overshadowed by their disabilities, or these students may mask or hide their learning deficits by using their talents to compensate. Sometimes a twice-exceptional child’s special education needs are overlooked until adolescence or later or are never identified.

During the 2019-2020 school year, Oklahoma has identified 2,379 gifted students with disabilities.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

It's important to recognize both the 2e student's strengths and weaknesses and differentiate instructional strategies to meet unique needs.

- **Acknowledge** the student's strengths.
- **Build** scaffolding to support student's areas of need.
- **Differentiate** the curriculum, product, type or content focus to a 2e student's interests and strengths.
- **Provide** choices for students to demonstrate their knowledge of the content taught.

ATTENDING TO EQUITY

To fully support twice-exceptional children, accommodations must be made to recognize the child's strengths and nurture their abilities while simultaneously supporting their challenges and needs.

Intellectual - Because this population has a conflicting set of needs, it often takes creativity and an open mind to dually differentiate by maximizing intellectual challenges while minimizing the effects of their difficulties.

Physical - Both physical organization of space and organization of workload are often challenging for 2e students. Traditional classroom environments often do not work for 2e students and require teachers to make classroom modifications.

Social/emotional environments - Focusing on a twice-exceptional child's strengths rather than weaknesses and finding peers who share their interests and abilities are essential for ensuring a child's social-emotional happiness.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How are you using a collaborative approach with families and other faculty members to support your 2e students?
- How are you empowering educators and families to help identify and nurture their 2e student's talents and strengths?
- What resources can help ensure we have a comprehensive evaluation of a twice-exceptional student?
- How can we create an educational environment where the twice-exceptional student thrives in areas of strength and receives appropriate accommodations for disability?

