

# TWICE EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

Students who are gifted come with a variety of skills and abilities. While they may have a specific strength in a particular area, they may also possess additional traits or characteristics that make identifying giftedness difficult.

Twice exceptional students may include those students who also may be identified as any of the following:

- English Language Learner
- Student with a Specific Learning Disability (this is often specific to one subject area with giftedness in another area)
- Student with an Orthopedic, Visual, or Auditory Disability
- Student with an Emotional or Behavioral Disability (this might include Anxiety, Depression, Oppositional Defiance, Obsessive Compulsive, ADHD, or any other array of concerns)
- Student with a Developmental Disability (this might include Autism Spectrum Disorder or Sensory Integration Disorder)

[Download a list of characteristics of children who are gifted that also have other factors, such as English as a second language or a disability.](#)

## **Students Who are Gifted & English Language Learners**

Students who are both gifted and English Language Learners can be found with careful observation. These students may not perform well in school at first, but they will demonstrate advanced language skills or critical thinking in their first language. Often, these students will progress more quickly than normal through LEP levels during their evaluations by the ESL Division. Using a non-verbal assessment, as is used by the CCS

Gifted & Talented assessors, may assist in identifying these students as gifted in superior cognitive ability, and students may identify as gifted in mathematics before other subject areas.

## **Students Who are Gifted & with a Disability**

There are two key issues when considering that a student might be both gifted and have a disability. The first is the potential for misdiagnosis of a disability. Often times, students who are gifted naturally display heightened sensitivities or intensity of experiences that may be confused for symptoms of a disability. The cognitive differences between a child identified as gifted in superior cognitive ability a typical classmates may make social interactions a challenge. Students who are academically advanced but are receiving instruction below their skill level may find other ways to spend their time that do not necessarily fit well into the traditional classroom. For more information about misdiagnosis, visits the [SENG Misdiagnosis Initiative](#).

The second key issue is the potential of no identification or diagnosis of the child's giftedness and/or disability. Often, a twice exceptional student's giftedness allows the learner to compensate in school just enough to be overlooked for a possible disability. At the same time, the disability is problematic enough to mask the child's giftedness. In such a case, the child lacks access to both types of critical services. Careful record keeping, work samples, anecdotal notes about conversations that show critical thinking, and discrepancies in test scores over time can be evidence that a deeper look is needed.

A great resource for parents, educators, and clinicians is Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnosis of Gifted Children and Adults by Dr. James Webb, Dr.

Edward Amend, and others. This easy-to-read book includes chapters for many major diagnoses that include lists of characteristics of someone who is gifted and someone with a specific disorder that might lead to misdiagnosis along with characteristics of someone who would be dually-diagnosed. It is a handy guide.

## **Did You Know...?**

Students evaluated by a school district or private practitioner for special education or a disability of some sort may be able to have test scores from that evaluation used for gifted identification. To be considered, scores must be on a test on Ohio's approved gifted testing list (typically most full intelligence tests and full achievement test batteries are accepted) and, if testing was done by a professional outside of an Ohio school district, the scores must be less than 24 months old. If your child has had such an evaluation, contact the Gifted & Talented office at (419)289-1117 ext. 2248 for information about submitting scores for review.

## **Tips for Assisting Your Student**

### **Look for signs that there may be dual exceptionalities.**

- Pay attention to inconsistencies in school performance. Is there a big difference in performance in different subject areas? Can the child express deep thinking orally but struggles to get it on paper? Are standardized test scores steadily declining or inconsistent (i.e. high score in Inview but low Terra Nova scores or big differences on subtest scores on the Inview or other cognitive/IQ testing)?
- Pay attention to behavioral changes. Do certain situations trigger problem behaviors (i.e. crowds, extreme noise, tight spaces, imperfection the first try)? Does the child react to particular textures or tastes or have a behavior change after eating certain foods?

**Advocate for assistance.**

- Request parents and educators take a deeper look for a possible disability, which may include testing.
- Bring in evidence of a disability as diagnosed by a physician or psychologist to support the creation of an IEP or 504 plan.
- Develop a plan to prevent trigger situations and teach the child skills to cope in times of struggle.

**Coach the student.**

- Model how you handle personal challenges, either due to a disability, personal trait, or circumstance beyond control.
- Provide assistance getting started with projects and planning use of time and materials but then let students take ownership.
- Limit rescues, but talk through strategies the student can use to overcome obstacles.