



Brainworks®

New Horizons for Students from Kindergarten through College Level, and Adults

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The Twice Exceptional Student: High Potential; Low Performance

by **Carla Crutsinger & Lori Bivens**

Who are twice exceptional students, also known as 2e or GT/LD? According to Montgomery County Public Schools (a district in Maryland), they are “those who are considered gifted, have a learning disability as defined by IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), and require special education services in order to receive educational benefit.” For some 2e students, this definition may seem a bit extreme, and most of these students can be identified in one of three ways. They may be labeled gifted due to high intellect, but they seem to “hit a wall.” They could appear to possess average intellect because their intellectual abilities mask one or more disabilities, which in turn may disguise giftedness. Finally, they may be labeled as simply learning disabled and treated as such at the expense of developing gifts and talents.

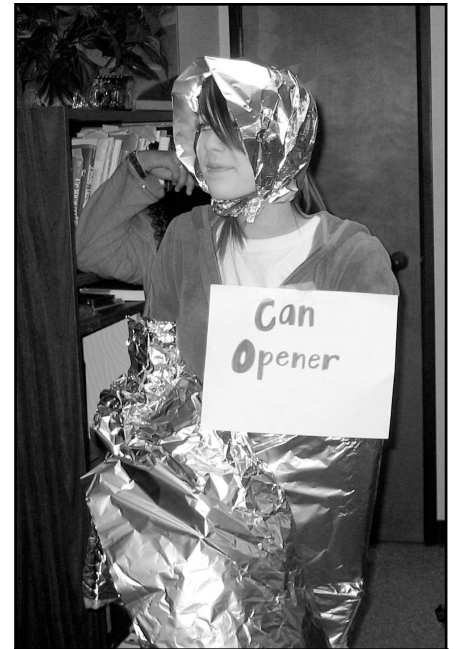
Often parents will tell amazing stories about how two-year-old Johnny would use logic beyond his years to talk Mom into buying a particular cereal or listen to a story once and repeat it from memory.

Their daughter might have discovered how to climb out of her crib before she could walk. These parents call their children geniuses before they even begin school and anticipate bright futures. However, when little Johnny begins school, discrepancies start to emerge. His teacher is amazed at his extensive vocabulary but becomes concerned when his written work displays vocabulary and spelling far beneath some of the weakest students in the class. This contradiction between potential and demonstrated ability leads the teacher to assume the student lacks motivation and may even be plain lazy. According to Susan Baum, Ph.D. and Steven Owen, Ph.D., 2e students feel less capable than even their learning-disabled peers with only average ability.

All three of the categories of students listed above having learning and motivational patterns that are unique to twice exceptional students. For educators and parents of these individuals, it is extremely important to discover how these students learn and why particular instructional strategies have not worked for them in the past. We must also find ways to motivate this population so they can perform at the level of their potential.

Some Possible 2e Student Characteristics

IQ Discrepancy - Montgomery County uses an “IQ and educational discrepancy range” among other criteria to identify GT/LD students. For example, to be given the label, students with IQs in the 130 to 139 range must function at 95-100, and those in the 120-129 range must function at 89-94.

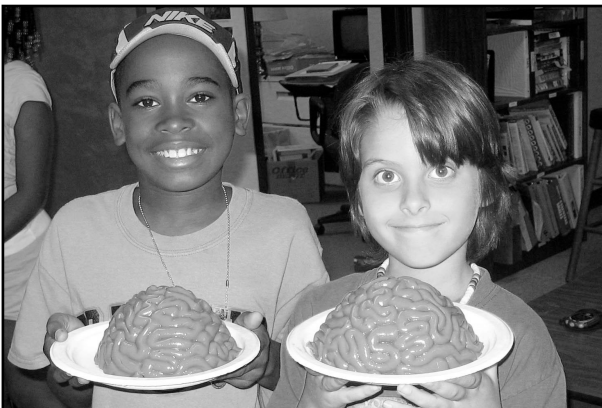


Pitch A Story Drama
Allison Gaw is playing the “Can Opener in the melodrama this summer

Reading - These students often cannot comprehend because their minds wander away from the passage. They may be eight years ahead in math but are perhaps two years below grade level in reading skills.

Written Work/Spelling - They may reverse letters or numbers and have trouble with phonics. They are likely to have messy handwriting and an awkward pencil grasp. These students probably have problems getting thoughts on paper and have difficulty with mechanics such as grammar and punctuation.

Organizational Skills - 2e students may confuse time relationships (yesterday, today, tomorrow) and have no sense of time, which makes it difficult to estimate



The Brains at Brainworks
Jordan Washington and Jack Scott share hemispheres for tying on game day.

Twice Exceptional Student Characteristics

time needed to complete tasks and to plan and complete projects. They also tend to lose assignments and possessions, forget to complete or turn in assignments, and have difficulty sticking to a schedule. They nearly always have problems staying on task.

Memory - These students are likely to have difficulty with rote learning (such as math facts) and memorize information without understanding it, which results in long-term memory problems. They also forget sequential steps (such as solving math problems), have trouble remembering more than three directions at a time, make careless mistakes, and have test anxiety.

Visual/Motor Integration - These students may also display difficulties (seen best in early grades) with cutting and pasting, copying simple shapes, writing letters and numbers correctly, and clumsiness. They also tend to have directional confusion with left, right, north, south, east, west, up, down, before, and after, which can result in getting lost often.

Learning Style - 2e students generally learn what they see and forget what they are told. According to Marilee Sprenger, M.A., Adjunct Professor at Aurora University in Illinois, their most effective ways to learn are by teaching others (90% retention), practicing by doing or using manipulatives (75% retention), and working in discussion groups (50% retention).

Self-concept - Twice exceptional students often have problems with low self-esteem.



“Smiles All Around”
Kaitlin Hornbaker and Kathy Tran celebrate winning the Set Tournament.

They may have high goals but are not able to stay on task long enough to reach these goals. They may also have problems with negative self-talk, frustration, impulsivity, which can cause risky behaviors, and/or emotions that overpower logic.

ADHD Behavior - One of the most common learning disabilities for GT/LD students is ADHD. Behavior associated with these disorders are distractibility, impulsivity, inattention, hyperactivity (not in all cases), daydreaming, boring easily, refusal to work on weak areas, and diverting the topic of discussion away from an academic weakness and toward a strength.

Early Identification

Identifying 2e characteristics early is critical to get these students the help they need before they lose the confidence required to succeed. After years of failure, they become frustrated, confused, depressed, and angry. Over time, this situation can deteriorate to the point that the student simply gives up hope.

Identifying and Using Gifts and Talents

So what can a classroom teacher realistically do to educate the 2e student? The first step is to identify his/her

gifts. Too often, these students are viewed in terms of what they cannot do. Teachers should remember that bright students (even with disabilities) need a challenging curriculum and watering down the curriculum does more harm than good. There are many ways to help these students achieve their potential.

First, the staff at Brainworks has discovered these students want to see the big picture before the details. To get their attention, the teacher needs to ask questions that hook their interest. Straight lecture tends to bore this population, which leads to lapses in attention. They like thought-provoking questions that make them think. Since they like to see patterns, associations, and comparisons, they should design graphic organizers to tie complex information together and organize concepts by color. Encourage them to use satire, metaphors, and analogies to explain concepts as well. They can also use music or rhyme to enhance presentations.

Teachers should take advantage of their excellent communication skills and advanced vocabulary and encourage them to participate in class discussions and make oral presentations. Instead of summarizing in writing what they have read, have them write discussion that will require students to use what they have read to support their answers, and get them to lead small groups. Teachers may also want to assign them topics to research as a follow-up to class discussion.



“Casual Learning”
Emilie Wright and Shelly Varghese discuss a logic exercise.

Helpful Strategies for 2e Students

Instructors should offer them opportunities to share knowledge in a variety of ways in addition to written composition. These can include videos, oral tests and presentations, audio tapes, etc. Provide projects with deadlines for each part of the assignment. For example, if the project is worth 100 points, each section may be worth 20. Consider letting students turn in each section as it is completed if possible.

Although 2e students tend to make careless errors in subjects such as math, they often display exceptional skills in reasoning and logic. Brainworks recommends that teachers can have them prepare to give a five-minute summary the next day about what was taught in class, and knowing that they will be teaching the class the next day tends to keep these students better focused on the topic while it is taught.

Finally, many of these students have strong artistic, musical, athletic, or mechanical aptitude. Design projects that can tap into this talent. Use their sophisticated sense of humor to design flashcards to learn “boring” facts for a test, and have them share their association patterns with the class.

Improving Weaknesses

While it is extremely important that the teacher target students' talents to improve confidence and ensure success, the teacher cannot ignore a student's deficiencies, which can be a myriad.

If the 2e student has difficulty with reading or listening, offer him/her content using books on tap, websites, videos/DVDs, experiential learning, etc. In addition, when these alternatives are offered to all students, the twice exceptional learner can accept accommodations without feeling inferior, a problem that may inhibit the success of these bright students.

Since putting ideas on paper is a problem, programs like Inspiration™ or Kidspiration™ may help develop pre-writing skills. Instead of having them do a written research paper, have them prepare a PowerPoint presentation and talk from the slides. Then, if a written report is necessary, the PowerPoint slides may become an outline.

Consider creating “office space” in a corner of the room to allow students to think and focus on tasks, and allow any student to sign up for this space. The area should contain a computer or AlphaSmart for writing and headphones for listening to music, which can help them focus. (Really!) Have sketchpads and building supplies or manipulatives available for them to use to organize their thoughts. Consider having a large exercise ball available to sit on for hyperactive students, who can think better with “controlled” wiggle space.



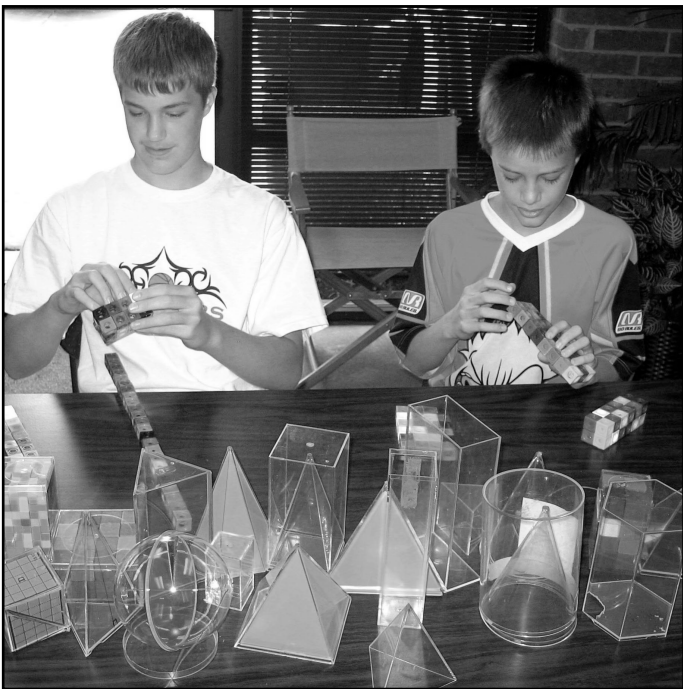
Game Plan “Manipulation”
Jordan Hornbuckle tries to talk Shelly Varghese out of rewriting his essay. (Didn't work!)

Often 2e students do not have good social skills. At Brainworks they role-play social situations to prevent problems and to correct mistakes made in the past. Making them aware when they say things that are hurtful is important, but more important is teaching them how to apologize and discussing a plan to prevent the problem from occurring again. Ideally, the teacher should meet with the bully and victim at the same time, so that they may discuss how it feels to be bullied or teased as well as alternative ways to handle conflict.

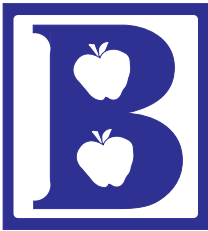
The Communication Factor

No program for twice exceptional students can be successful unless the parents and the teacher have an open line of communication. Teachers should listen to parents and remember that they have instincts that tell them when something is wrong. Most parents want to help teachers help their children and are willing to try whatever it takes. Keep in mind that if the teacher wants to change behaviors, the student should be included in the conferences with the parent.

Lastly, they one thing that can paralyze this entire process is fear. If the child is afraid to ask for help, the teacher may not know he/she needs it or what help to give. Parents and teachers should have the child practice giving a “secret” signal to indicate help is needed, since most 2e students live in complete terror of being laughed at or embarrassed. If a teacher can determine how to bridge this gap, everyone will win, and the child's life will be changed forever.



“Volume Contest”
The Crutsinger brothers, Hunter and Travis, are discovering the formulas for volume.



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 • Fall Lecture Series

New Symptoms Proposed for Diagnosing Adult ADHD

Recently, Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D. and Kevin R. Murphy, Ph.D. published an article, "Identifying New Symptoms for Diagnosing ADHD in Adulthood," the results of a study determining whether the ADHD symptoms currently listed in the DSM-IV should be applied to adults. Since the current list was developed and field-tested using children, Barkley and Murphy felt that it could not accurately diagnose Adult ADHD.

The nine symptoms they eventually recommended for diagnosis of ADHD in adults include the following:

1. Is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
2. Often makes decisions impulsively
3. Often has difficulty stopping activities or behavior when he/she should do so
4. Often starts a project or task without reading or listening to directions carefully
5. Often shows poor follow-through on promises or commitments made to others
6. Often has trouble doing things in their proper order or sequence
7. Often more likely to drive a vehicle much faster than others (excessive speeding)
8. Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities
9. Often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities

Barkley and Murphy recommend use of the DSM-IV's symptom threshold, meaning that six of the nine symptoms must be evident before diagnosis may be made.

Brainworks Fall Workshops

****If you would like an e-mail reminder of these workshops, e-mail us at Carla@brainworks.info and let us know the e-mail address to which you would like a reminder sent.****

For Adults, Parents and Professionals • Reservations Required
 7 - 8:30 p.m. 1918 Walnut Plaza, Carrollton

<p>October 3, 2007</p> <p>Survival Skills for ADHD Students and Parents Carla Cruetsinger, M.S., Director</p> <p>This workshop covers everything from getting up in the morning to bedtime and all in between.</p>	<p>November 7, 2007</p> <p>ADHD: Facts and Fiction Dr. David R. Missimo, M.D.</p> <p>Dr. Missimo is a child, adolescent, and adult psychiatrist in private practice at Parkway Psychiatric Associates in Plano.</p>
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