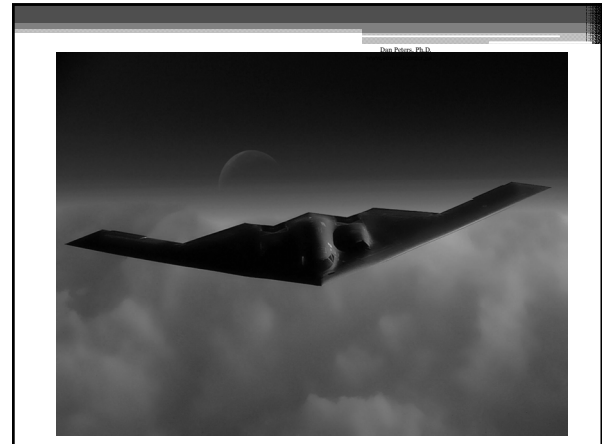


**Stealth Dyslexia:  
Flying Under the Radar**

**Dan Peters, Ph.D.**  
Licensed Psychologist, PSY 16823  
Executive Director

**Summit Center**  
Santa Monica, Walnut Creek, Napa, Millbrae  
[www.summitcenter.us](http://www.summitcenter.us)  
[www.DrDanPeters.com](http://www.DrDanPeters.com)



**Annie- Age 8-5, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade**


- Recognized as advanced in math, but reading was always harder for her.
- Reversals were evident in reading and spelling (e.g., “baby bird” was spelled “dady drbe”), she added words, and missed some sounds altogether.
- Experiences anxiety over reading, writing and spelling.
- Spends at least one full weekend day on homework to avoid losing sleep each night. “If no one helps me in reading it will take me 24 hours!”

**Table 1. Annie's Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fourth Edition (WISC-IV).**

**Table 1.** Student A's Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fourth Edition (WISC-IV).

Composite/Index	Standard score	Percentile	Range
Verbal Comprehension	130	98	Very superior (“Gifted”)
Perceptual Reasoning	133	99	Gifted
Working Memory	113	81	High average
Processing Speed	88	21	Low average
General Ability Index	138	99	Gifted

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**Table 2. Annie's Woodcock-Johnson-III Tests of Achievement (WJ-III ACH).**

**Table 2.** Student A's Woodcock-Johnson-III Tests of Achievement (WJ-III ACH).

Area	Standard score	Percentile	Level
Brief Reading	93	31	Average
Brief Math	130	98	Superior
Brief Writing	93	33	Average

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**Brian - Age 16-1**

- “We know he is smart. Why does he struggle in a traditional school environment?”
- Failing for 4 semesters, too many classes to make up in summer school
- Brian's mother reported that for 2 years she had asked the school to test Brian; however, school personnel saw no need.
- He was designated as “gifted in art and leadership,” so educators thought his academic problems were due to laziness.



Table 3. Brian's Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Fourth Edition (WAIS-IV).

Table 3. Student B's Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Fourth Edition (WAIS-IV).

Composite/Index	Standard score	Percentile	Range
Verbal Comprehension	141	99.7	Gifted
Perceptual Organization	105	63	Average
Working Memory	95	37	Average
Processing Speed	86	18	Low average

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Table 4. Brian's Woodcock Johnson-III Tests of Achievement (WJ-III ACH).

Table 4. Student B's Woodcock Johnson-III Tests of Achievement (WJ-III ACH).

Area assessed	Standard score	Percentile	Grade equivalent	Range
Letter-word	96	40	9.5	Average
Passage	110	75	>18.0	Average
Comprehension				
Reading Fluency	101	54	11.2	Average
Word Attack	88	21	4.5	Low average
Broad Reading	102	56	11.4	Average
Calculation	101	51	11.0	Average
Applied Problems	101	54	11.4	Average
Math Fluency	67	1	3.9	Low
Broad Math	94	33	8.6	Average
Spelling	85	15	5.9	Low average
Writing Samples	103	59	13.0	Average
Writing Fluency	92	29	7.6	Average
Broad Written	90	26	7.5	Low average
Language				

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## Is Brian "average" and "fine"?

- He never learned multiplication tables.
- There were significant holes in his knowledge of arithmetic operations.
- Broad Reading was average, but nonsense word reading (Word Attack) was low average (fourth grade level), suggesting a reading disability (dyslexia).
- He never learned to sound out words.
- Spelling was low average, at the fifth grade level.
- Writing Samples showed writing weaknesses combined with *gifted* content.

## What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological processing component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include reading comprehension and reduced reading experiences that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

International Dyslexia Association

## Stealth Dyslexia

- Drs. Brock and Fernette Eide (*The Mislabeled Child, The Dyslexic Advantage*) have done considerable work on what they call "stealth dyslexia" in gifted children, because their grade-level performance may hide a significant LD.
- They advocate teaching to strengths, but also addressing the likely constellation of processing weaknesses (sensory, visual, auditory).

## Stealth Dyslexia - M.I.N.D. Strengths

- **Material Reasoning** – Advanced 3D/Spatial Reasoning
- **Interconnected Reasoning** – Making connection from vast and diverse information
- **Narrative Reasoning** – Interacting with the world through stories, story-teller
- **Dynamic Reasoning** – Able to take past and present situations and predict future outcomes

*The Dyslexic Advantage*, Brock and Fernette Eide



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## Memory and Processing

- High episodic memory, low procedural memory (sequencing)
- High contextual memory; low rote memory
- Many with stealth dyslexia have a constellation of weaknesses including some or all of the following: executive-functioning, auditory processing, and visual processing.

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## What happens in the classroom?

- Performs **below average** – weaknesses over power strengths
- Performs “**average**”; meets “grade expectations” – strengths and weaknesses cancel each other out
- Performs **high average** – strengths over power weaknesses

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## What happens to the student?

- Fatigue
- Frustration
- Self-criticism – “I’m stupid”
- Hopelessness
- Underachievement
- Anxiety
- Depression

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## What to look for....

- High verbal abilities and average academic performance
- Students who are a mystery because they are not performing to their perceived potential
- Poor handwriting; mixture of upper and lower case words
- Poor spelling; can get most right on Friday’s spelling test, but forgets most words by Monday

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## More things to look for...

- Poor spelling; can get most right on Friday’s spelling test, but forgets most words by Monday
- Difficulty memorizing math facts
- Fails to respond to literacy efforts that emphasize *more* reading; reading level may improve by end of school year, but gains are lost by fall.
- Frustration with learning and producing work

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## Annie - What’s really going on?

- Gifted verbal and visual intelligence
- Reading Disability (dyslexia)
- Disorder of Written Expression
- sensory, auditory, and visual processing weaknesses
- some executive functioning issues



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## What does Annie need?

- A strength-based learning plan.
- Advancement in math.
- IEP for reading/writing interventions and accommodations to manage her workload and ensure success.
- Interventions/accommodations are needed for sensory processing, auditory processing, and visual processing deficits, and some executive functioning issues.

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## Brian - What is really going on?

- Gifted verbal intelligence
- Reading Disorder (Dyslexia)
- Mathematics Disorder,
- visual and auditory processing weaknesses
- depression

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## What happened to Brian?

- Did not qualify for sufficient services (IEP) to remain in school. Offered no options to repeat work more slowly or take fewer courses per semester.
- 504 Plan insufficient.
- Couldn't keep up.
- Self-confidence declined.
- Suffered depression
- Dropped out of school.

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## What happened?

### IDEA 2004 - Response To Intervention (RTI)

- RTI was designed for students who are performing academically below grade level
- The goal is to get them **up to grade level**, not for them to achieve in relationship to their potential
- Those who fail to respond to interventions are referred to Special Education
- Now special education law and even the DSM-5 requires absolute low performance.

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## Comprehensive Assessment Finds Gifted/Dyslexic Children Easily

The use of a comprehensive IQ test (e.g., WISC) and individual achievement test can document the complex patterns of strengths, weaknesses, and current academic achievement typical of advanced learners/gifted children with learning disabilities.

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## What to do...

- Refer a child to a RTI or SST team when he/she is not performing as expected
- Refer or request a comprehensive evaluation in writing
- Use the testing results to put together an IEP or Section 504 plan that capitalizes on the child's strengths and talents, while also providing accommodation and intervention



## Focus on Strengths/Develop Talent

- The child's strengths must be addressed first!
- What are they good at?
- Passionate about?
- Interested in?
- Use strengths to improve weaknesses
- Maximize assistive technology

## Recommended Resources

**Critical Issues in the Identification of Gifted Students With Co-Existing Disabilities: The Twice-Exceptional**  
<http://sgo.sagepub.com/content/3/3/2158244013505855.full>

**Gifted + Learning Disabled = No Desk For You**  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-b-peters-phd/gifted-learning-disabled-b\\_5052115.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-b-peters-phd/gifted-learning-disabled-b_5052115.html)

**The Dyslexic Advantage** by Brock Eide, M.D., and Fernette Eide, M.D.

**The Dyslexic Empowerment Plan** by Ben Foss