

Twice-exceptional Youth



Gifted characteristics can coexist with learning, emotional, behavioral, and social developmental delays in the same child. This uneven, or asynchronous, development can cause extreme frustration, stress, and emotional and behavioral reactions leading to difficulties and misunderstanding both in and out of school.

Referred to as twice-exceptional, or 2e, these young people have high potential but can slip through the cracks in educational settings where their gifts and needs go unnoticed or misinterpreted. Through advocacy, intervention, and a focus on their strengths, these exceptional youth can thrive.

Twice-exceptional Explained

Twice-exceptional describes individuals who fall into the exceptional range statistically for their cognitive, academic, or creative abilities and potential, and also fall in the lower end of exceptional in their deficit area. A twice-exceptional fifth grader may read at a high-school level but write at a third grade level. They may excel in certain learning environments yet find themselves unable to function in others. For some twice-exceptional students, organization, class participation, and planning challenge them to the point that they fall behind, have inconsistent academic performance, struggle with expression, emotions and social interaction, and spend much of their time frustrated. The combination of advanced abilities and exceptionalities such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Dyslexia, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, and Sensory Integration Disorder (SID) can be difficult for the student, teachers, and families to reconcile without support.

As these youth go undetected, misunderstood, or labeled as lazy or unmotivated., they struggle to reach their potential and are at risk for issues with self-efficacy, self-confidence, motivation, loss of joy for learning and belief in their own strengths.

Although twice-exceptional youth are most often identified by their needs and perceived deficits, they have high ability and great potential. A misalignment between their learning profile and a school's curriculum and approach can create significant hardship for the student, their family, and teachers. Not surprisingly, twice-exceptional students often stump educators and parents unfamiliar with their abilities and needs and therefore end up at a distinct disadvantage in and out of school.

The complexities of their learning profiles can result in the masking or concealing of learning differences and deficits by compensating with their talents and abilities. Similarly, their giftedness and potential for advanced learning can be hidden behind their challenges.

In most cases, twice-exceptional students are recognized and served appropriately when they can prove their giftedness as well as their need for services. With the right resources in place and a focus on strengths, they can reach their potential and share their gifts.



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Who are twice-exceptional youth?

- The intellectually gifted child who cannot read well due to dyslexia. They may feel stupid, experience low self-esteem, and stop trying in school.
- The academically gifted child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who has tremendous difficulty in social situations and becomes overwhelmed and anxious in social and learning environments.
- The artistically gifted child with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) continues to get in trouble for “not paying attention” and blurring out all the answers.
- The child gifted with leadership abilities who struggles with written expression due to dysgraphia and avoids writing a speech on a topic they understand and care about deeply.
- A creatively gifted student with anxiety who struggles with worry and panic to the point they no longer want to go to school.

The combination of strengths and challenges for twice-exceptional individuals are identified through cognitive and achievement assessments and neuroeducational and neuropsychological evaluations conducted by clinical experts. The resulting recommendations for counseling, therapies, and interventions provide families with the direction and resources needed to support their twice-exceptional child both in and out of school.

For more information, visit <https://summitcenter.us/services> and read [Characteristics of Twice-exceptional Students](#).

Supporting Twice-exceptional Youth

Schools specializing in twice-exceptional students are typically versed in learning needs across a wide spectrum of abilities. It is important for a chosen learning environment to provide support for the unique needs of a twice exceptional students with a focus on strengths-based and talent-based approaches in addition to expertise in learning differences and disabilities.

For parents and advocates, understanding whether specific mandates for gifted education are in place within a given state and school system, what services school systems are required to provide, and how students qualify for access to gifted programming is critical. At the same time, understanding how to qualify for special education services or classroom accommodations to address learning disabilities and differences is equally important. This journey is best traveled by engaging with clinical professionals and education advocates with expertise in assessments and the laws in place to identify and appropriately serve twice-exceptional youth.

Resources for Parents & Educators

- 2e News
- Bright & Quirky
- Davidson Institute for Talent Development
- GHF Gifted Learners (formerly Gifted Homeschoolers Forum)
- Hoagies' Gifted Education
- National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC)
- Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talent Development
- Roeper Review
- Summit Center
- Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)

About Summit Center

Summit Center, founded by Drs. Daniel B. Peters and Susan Daniels, provides educational and comprehensive assessments, consultations, and counseling for children, teens, adults, and families. We work with clients who are neurodiverse, gifted, talented, twice-exceptional (have both gifted and less developed abilities), and/or are asynchronous in their development. Summit Center has assembled an expert team of professionals and specialists dedicated to using a strengths-based approach to help our clients reach their fullest developmental potential.