

A Gift for the Gifted: Assistive Technology & the Twice Exceptional Student



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They're a living, breathing human paradox: children with exceptional cognitive and intellectual gifts and talents who have learning disabilities. There are tens of thousands among us, though their exact number is uncertain. What is certain is that the gifts some possess can literally change the world.

Thomas Edison, the father of modern electricity and a prolific inventor who obtained 1,093 patents by age 21, experienced difficulty in school and likely was dyslexic. His teachers told him he was stupid.

Albert Einstein, one of the great geniuses of human history and the father of the theory of relativity, had difficulty solving simple math calculations.

Winston Churchill, Great Britain's storied prime minister during World War II, who "marshaled the English language and sent it off to war," failed the sixth grade.

Leonardo DiVinci, a superior artist and master inventor, who was fascinated with the integrated operation of levers and gears that were at the heart of his inventions from the crane to the helicopter, was dyslexic.

Walt Disney, creator of Mickey Mouse and the pioneer of animated feature films, winner of 32 Academy Awards and founder of the Disney entertainment empire, had a learning disability.

According to A. Bandura (1982), the main issue that must be addressed in dealing with "twice exceptional" children is self-efficacy, the perception that an individual can organize and carry out an action. Non-gifted children with learning disabilities (LD) may gain self-efficacy from remedial, structured learning reduced to manageable tasks. This approach, however, Bandura insists, often proves unsuccessful with twice exceptional students, who gain self-efficacy from accomplishments that they respect and perceive as challenges. Frequently, he adds, parents and teachers of twice exceptional students are so focused on "curing" a disability, which is not curable, that they dismiss the strengths and remarkable talents of these students.



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According to Susan Baum (1990), a noted authority on twice exceptional students, four general guidelines can aid professionals in building programs for these children:

- Focus attention on the development of the gift
- Provide a nurturing environment that values individual differences
- Encourage compensation strategies
- Encourage awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses

For these students assistive technology is a key compensatory tool that helps to neutralize their disabilities. Explains Marisa Stemple, instructional specialist for gifted and talented children with learning disabilities (GT/LD) in Maryland's Montgomery County public schools, "With our students there is an emphasis on remediation and skills instruction, but at some point we have to ask, how do we get them to perform to their ability level, and how do we make the disability not a disability? AT fills that void in many ways."

Marisa Stemple Speaks

Marisa came to the GT/LD field via an interest in special education, which she began to nurture early in her undergraduate studies at the University of Maryland, where she majored in educational disabilities. She further refined that interest in her graduate program at Maryland, where she earned a Masters degree in learning disabilities in 1997. "My first job out of college was as a GT/LD teacher in a Montgomery County middle school setting. I taught within that program for seven years before I came into the position I now have."

"I got into special ed because it immediately piqued my interest when I arrived at college. I had a friend whose sister was going into the special ed program to study severe disabilities. I didn't have an interest in that specific field but it dawned on me that there was this huge population of kids with learning disabilities who needed something more than just a good teacher. I explored it more and decided to make it my undergrad major."

She found herself drawn toward kids with LDs, because they grasped concepts and could dive into the learning and yet still had special needs. I still felt like I was addressing the overall LD population that I wanted to serve."

She has no regrets. "It's a joy to teach GT/LD. Once you've done it, you're hooked. You don't come back from it. There's just so much pleasure and excitement in teaching kids who

love to learn, have a thirst for knowledge and learn easily if they are taught effectively. You can see so much progress. Once I was in this position I could not see myself anywhere else."

Supporting our interview with Ms. Stemple are resources to aid parents and others in further understanding the impact of AT on gifted and talented children who also have learning disabilities. We also feature members of our Knowledge Network. The members spotlighted this month focus on various aspects of GT/LD education that are supported by assistive technology. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to contact us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.



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The Kids for Whom Hard Tasks Are Easy and Easy Tasks Are Hard: AT and GT/LD Students

An Interview with Marisa Stemple, GT/LD instructional specialist

They are, in turns, brilliant and flawed. They are kids with highly developed abilities in some areas, such as music, intellectual activity and artistic endeavors. Academically, however, they struggle to overcome information processing weaknesses. Their strengths are superior and qualify them as brilliant. Their flaws qualify them for special ed consideration. They represent an educational paradox but, increasingly, they are identified early on and thanks to instructional specialists like Montgomery County, Maryland's Marisa Stemple, can be placed in classes where their intellectual power is harnessed to academic rigor. They are called "twice exceptional" children and gifted/talented with learning disabilities (GT/LD) – the kids for whom hard tasks are easy and easy tasks are hard.



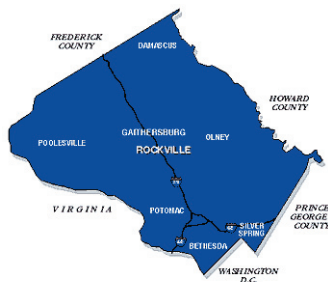
Marisa Stemple

No ID Code

Defining GT/LD is also both easy and hard. In Montgomery County, a collection of suburbs near the nation's capital, "we operate under the federal and Maryland guidelines in terms of determining the eligibility of a student with learning disabilities," Marisa explains. "They're the same guidelines for gifted students with LD. When we look at the gifted and talented (GT) portion, there's no formal label for GT/LD in terms of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). There's no code for GT/LD other than those students are determined to have a learning disability."

In Montgomery County, she continues, "we have a clearly laid out policy for gifted and talented students. There's an identification process that the county goes through in second grade to identify students as gifted and talented or in need of accelerated, enriched instruction. That process identifies students as gifted and talented and as GT/LD."

The county also administers a battery of tests to evaluate the presence of a learning disability, "tests from which we



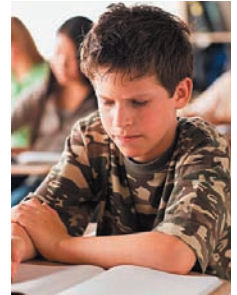
glean cognitive information. These tests may enable us to spot superior cognitive abilities that would lead us to a GT/LD diagnosis. We also have a way to recognize the characteristics that would also show that a student is gifted."

Superior Cognitive Ability; Significant Academic Deficits

A student can be found to be gifted in numerous ways via multiple data sources, she adds. "Then the LD piece comes into play through the regular federal and state guidelines. "GT/LD is defined as having superior cognitive ability while also having significant academic deficits. It's a dichotomy that is sometimes difficult for those not in the profession to understand. I'm often asked, 'So you have a GT class and an LD class?' My response is always, 'No, we have a GT/LD class' Many people can't envision the same characteristics in an individual child."

Traits Surface Early

Minus non-existent formal evidence about age at which GT/LD traits begin to become apparent in children, Marisa's anecdotal data suggests that GT/LD traits begin to surface in second or third grade. "Before that we may have had a glimmer of suspicion in terms of reading readiness not being present yet or written expression not being quite there. But it's in second or third grade, when the curriculum demands target in on reading and writing to learn whether or not a child can explain him/herself and to learn and communicate information, that GT/LD students hit a wall."



Until that point, she explains, "these children are often able to compensate with their verbal strengths and cognitive and intellectual abilities to grasp concepts and perform well. We may have some suspicions but it's not until school becomes difficult for them that they begin to fall apart."

The Roles in GT/LD Identification

Identifying GT/LD students is a team effort, Marisa remarks. "We view it as a puzzle that has to be assembled by the teacher, the parents, the student and all the professionals who are working with the student. Each has a different perspective. Sometimes it's not until you put all those pieces together that the full picture can be seen."

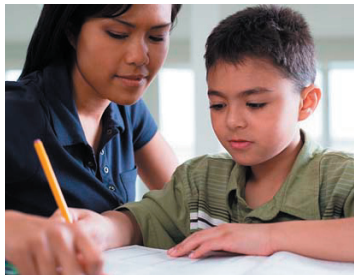
For example, she adds, the reading teacher might say, "This kid can't read." The art teacher might say, "This is a really artistic visual/spatial student." The science teacher might

say, "This student has an amazing wealth of background knowledge." Then the student's parents might say, "Our child comes home and cries about homework." All these observations, she notes, "contribute to the overall picture so that we understand the ups and the downs because they are what makes our kids GT/LD."

The parents' role goes a little further because of the masking phenomenon, she explains. "Many of our kids mask their disability with their strengths or their strengths are masked by their disability. Or they just look average. In that case the parents, therefore, often have a unique perspective that enables them to say, 'Something's not right here.' That perspective, she adds, allows them to see through the "average" mask that might look OK from a teacher's perspective." "A parent, however, can say, 'This doesn't feel right. My child is crying at home. She doesn't want to go to school.' Or, 'I have this terribly bright child and, suddenly, this child doesn't seem so bright.' That's the outside-of-school snapshot of the child that a parent contributes to the identification process."

Parents Represent Just One Perspective

It's often difficult to sort through the information parents provide, Marisa notes. "The parent perspective is but one perspective. You have to look at the full data set. We look at informal and formal assessments, classroom performance, report cards and other sources to glean a reliable picture of a child's overall history."



Usually, she says, a GT/LD diagnosis confirms what the parents had already perceived but were unable to categorize: the ups and downs that they have witnessed in their child. "Sometimes there is parental resistance to the likelihood that their child has a disability. Sometimes they are uncertain that their child is gifted."

Montgomery County has a strong GT/LD parent community. "We have a very good working relationship with the parent community. It's a reciprocal relationship and our nationally recognized GT/LD programs and services receive a great deal of support from this community."

Suggestions for Underserved Communities

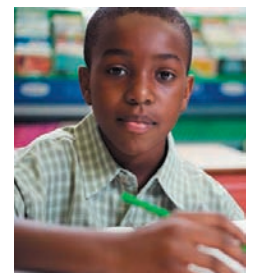
The dearth of self-contained GT/LD programs nationwide begs the question: How are these kids identified in rural and other underserved areas that lack the resources and sophistication of Montgomery County?"

"I get phone calls from parents across the nation who have seen our website and they want to know what they can do for their children," Marisa replies. "How successful they'll be depends on the awareness level of the community in which they reside and the willingness of that community to recognize a student with such a profile as being a special needs student."

What is her recommendation to parents from underserved communities who suspect that their child might fit the GT/LD profile and they don't know where to turn for help or information? "I'd recommend they do some reading. There are many published articles available about twice exceptional students."

In today's world of gifted education, the concept of twice exceptionality is a focus getting some attention. "It's a discussion topic. There are plenty of experts. Our primary philosophy with these students is that they recognize their gift. We teach to the students' strengths. They are programmed for as gifted and talented students whose needs are met within that context. As a starting point, teams need to ask, 'Are we programming for the GT/LD student as a bright student? What are the options that should be available to that student if they did not have a disability and then move to develop the IEP or accommodations with that in mind?'"

"When I'm training I talk about the fact that for GT/LD students, the hard things are easy and the easy things are hard. I'm looking for that profile. In reading, does comprehension come naturally to the student? When the child reads a story does he/she understand, interpret and make connections and yet can't read the words? In math, does the child get the concepts and know the answer first but yet can't remember that $5 \times 5 = 25$?"

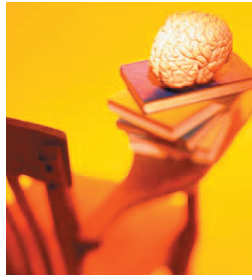


"I'll typically see verbal reasoning or nonverbal reasoning in the superior range. Then we'll often see the processing speed and working memory coming out in the average or below average range."

What's the GT/LD IQ Range?

The base IQ for GT/LD categorization is not set in stone, Marisa notes. "If you read the literature, as with any data study, people will set the bar at different levels. I think that the typical understanding of what is meant by GT/LD is usually two standard deviations above the mean cognitively,

which translates to a score of 130 and above. On the WISC IV (Wechsler Intelligence Test for Children) test, which is currently a widely used IQ test, 120 and above is superior, 130 and above is very superior.”



“She shares that many GT/LD students score in the superior range (translates to a score of 120 and above) on the Verbal Comprehension Index or the Perceptual Reasoning Index on the WISC IV”.

These are tests that are typically part of the evaluation battery,” she explains. “There’s a cognitive assessment, an educational assessment. WISC4 is just one of many tests a psychologist can choose to give. In our county we usually give the Woodcock-Johnson Tests for Achievement or the WIAT (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test) as assessments for educational levels. There are several other tests for formal and informal educational assessments. Within those tests there are typical profiles and patterns that jump out at me.

The Major Identification Challenge: Masking

For Marisa, masking represents a major challenge in the GT/LD identification process. “Masking is a tough hurdle, she says, knowing that there is a problem to begin with and putting it in a relative context.

Expectations are another challenge. “The expected level of performance for a student with an IQ in the 130s is not the typical expected level of performance for an average student. You have to know that there’s a problem to investigate and once you begin investigating, knowing that perhaps average or near average performance might not be good enough for that student.”

GT/LD IEPs: How Do they Differ?

The GT/LD IEP is similar to other IEPs in many ways “because an IEP is written around the individual needs of the student, the areas where they require specialized instruction, and the accommodations they require to access the curriculum.” In terms of those considerations, she notes, the GT/LD IEP is the same as IEPs for other children with LDs. “Our focus for our GT/LD students is to make the accommodations strength based.”

In other words, she adds, “if a student is very verbal, dictation may be an accommodation on the IEP. If a student is very visual/spatial, visual aids may be part of the IEP, or verbal information might be paired with visual information, or graphic organizers might be provided. That should be the

case for all students, of course, but for me, when I’m helping to develop IEPs for GT/LD kids, it’s important for me to know where their strengths and needs lie. They may have weaknesses in decoding and spelling which would require specialized instruction in those areas. They may also have strengths in reading comprehension which would require access to above-level texts for reading comprehension instruction. During this rigorous instruction, accommodations (such as read-alouds or recorded books) would need to be provided in order for the student to access the challenging text.”

Assistive Technology Fills the Void

Assistive Technology (AT), Marisa says, has a prominent role to play in the education of GT/LD students. “AT is a very important compensatory tool for these kids. Having AT in place allows them to obviate their disability. This is critical. With our students there is an emphasis on remediation and skills instruction, but at some point we have to ask, how do we get them to perform to their ability level, and how do we make the disability not a disability? AT fills that void in many ways.”

“There’s a repertoire of AT that we use in our county for all students, but for GT/LD students a key piece of AT equipment is the portable word processor. We use AlphaSmart DANAs and NEOs that enable students to work independently at their desk, type their responses and then go to the computer and print the responses out.”

Much writing software is incorporated into her students’ IEPs, including graphic organizers such as Inspiration. “We have access to the Solo package, a Don Johnston product, which includes DraftBuilder, Co:Writer, Write:OutLoud and Read:OutLoud.”

“DraftBuilder is an effective way to get students through the writing process. Write:OutLoud is a great tool for our kids to read their text back to them so they can pick up on errors they may have missed. Co:Writer is effective for our kids who have significant spelling issues, because they have the ideas but they don’t have the spelling capability. Co:Writer, as word prediction software, allows them to use the appropriate level of vocabulary rather than just relying on the words they know how to spell.”

In terms of reading, she says, Read:OutLoud is an option because it can read from the Web. “We use the Kurzweil program as a text reader for digital text that lets the student scan in documents or create CDs of novels or textbooks. Kurzweil will read back to the students. It contains a lot of

features that enable them to interact with the text, to write notes, to look up words in the dictionary.

“Our goal for all students, including GT/LD students, is to promote independence. AT facilitates that, whereas a student might need a reader, he/she can now use Kurzweil. A student might need someone to take dictation, he/she can now use Inspiration and DraftBuilder to turn ideas into writing.”

“AT promotes independence, but sometimes our students aren’t ready for the technology. For a young child with output issues, it’s appropriate to start with a scribe to give them ways to improve output and to begin to work on keyboard skills. Propping them in front of the computer with the technology is not the answer. They have to be at the readiness level where they work with it and it makes sense for what their needs are. Students need some skills to work with AT. Students who cannot spell or read at all will be unable to use Co:Writer, for example. AT must be individually matched. The best way is to try one piece of equipment at a time to see what works.”

GT/LD Characteristics

According to Marisa, the most prominent GT/LD characteristics are high level thinking ability, critical thinking skills, creativity, curiosity, strong reasoning ability, problem solving, verbal skills, vocabulary, “all the things that might come to mind when you think of a cognitively gifted student.”

Those characteristics, she adds, exist simultaneously with basic skill deficits, basic writing, basic reading, recall of math facts, short-term memory, processing speed – “but the thinking is there when they are given time. Memory can also be a strength in terms of concepts and the things that are important to that student that they never forget. There are kids who might know everything about a certain topic of interest once it’s lodged in their memory yet cannot remember dates.”

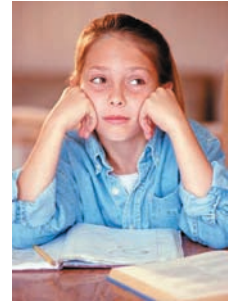
The most important components in the education of the GT/LD student, she notes, are access to challenge, access to rigor and access to stimulating curriculum. “If students don’t have access to these three components, then nothing else makes sense.”

Best Practices for Teaching GT/LD Students

Marisa boils down best practices for teaching twice exceptional students to meeting the students’ needs as GT learn-

ers, providing the following: appropriate remediation and skills instruction; appropriate accommodations and compensatory tools, including AT, so that the students can access the appropriate GT instruction; appropriate case management and the wrap-around service of the case manager who can oversee all the facets of the programming.

Explains Marisa, “There has to be one individual who knows everything that’s going on because sometimes it’s a mixed bag of services, some targeted at GT, others are remedial. Knowing how to access all the pieces of the puzzle that are neatly in place for a GT/LD student in terms of the balanced instructional day requires a central manager.”



As far as the guiding principles accepted as best practices for providing adequate adaptations and accommodations to GT/LD students, “There’s a lot to consider when looking at what accommodations should be on an IEP for a GT/LD student,” Marisa says. “It depends on the student’s readiness. We want to meet student needs appropriately and yet not overdo it. We don’t want to enable our students or to over-accommodate. We want to promote independence and always to be moving them along the continuum from dependence to independence, which also includes adult support, using tools and compensating for their disabilities.”

Evaluations are constant, she adds. “There may be accommodations that are appropriate for a student one year and inappropriate the next because the student has progressed so much. Our goal is to level the playing field and provide GT/LD students with opportunities that are equal to their gifted peers. We want to empower them, not enable them. That’s a fine line of interpretation when we are selecting accommodations.”

Interventions: Providing Greater Access to Appropriately Challenging Instruction

Determining which interventions provide the best access to appropriately challenging instruction depends on data analysis and the learner profile that reveals a student’s strengths and needs. “If you’re talking about interventions to address the needs then you have to analyze where the needs are. In an area of weakness, our students have significant strengths. Intervention should be provided only in areas where need exists. That approach would improve their skills so that they can access more independently curriculum at the appropriate level.”



“We don’t wait for skills to be remediated or improved for students to access challenging curriculum,” Marisa emphasizes. “Our presumption is that’s where they belong if they are at that intellectual conceptual level. We then provide the supports and accommodations and skills instruction along the way. But one doesn’t come before the other.”

AT Is Like a Miracle

“In surmounting a GT/LD student’s specific disabilities, she declares, “AT is like a miracle.” For students with writing disabilities, “once the keyboarding skills are there, their fine motor or spelling disabilities are almost functionally gone even though they, in fact, continue to be present. It’s critical that we move students into the use of AT as soon as appropriate.”

Many GT/LD students experience organizational difficulties. In Montgomery County, “we use Edline, the online grading system, as well as online websites like Blackboard, educational websites where assignments and grades can be posted and from which students can download worksheets. We use email. Our case managers and teachers will email students and students will email a completed assignment back to the teacher so that the student does not forget to turn it in. Some of our kids use USB Flash Drives to carry their work back and forth from school. These tools are a big help to kids who have trouble tracking their homework and submitting their assignments. Many of our teachers now use Edline to maintain class calendars and online syllabuses and to provide written directions and descriptions of class projects for kids who have lost track of their assignments. This Edline information is available to everyone but has great benefits for our organizationally challenged kids.”

For reading disabilities, her students have been aided by books on tape in addition to more high tech software. “A lot of our county schools have accounts with Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic. Many of our students have individual accounts that enable them to order their own textbooks.”

Her GT/LD students wrestling with memory challenges have enjoyed success by using a computer to create notes and use outlines and to make templates and organizers. “Students can create their own memory aids as well in order to keep a record of the concepts that are being taught and their notes.

What Works for GT/LD Students – and What Doesn’t

Marisa maintains a top five list of which strategies work for GT/LD students and which do not. What works: 1.)

Creativity in the classroom; 2.) Flexibility; 3.) Using and infusing critical thinking skills; 3.) Going along with the natural talents and abilities that our students have; 4.) Igniting our students’ passion for learning; 5.) Tapping into their interests. Things that don’t work include: 1.) Being very rigid and inflexible in the classroom; 2.) Not providing accommodations; 3.) Not providing technology; 4.) Treating all students the same; 5.) Watering down information for our students.

“Adding rigor, complexity, critical thinking and expectations is what works. Simplification does not work,” she remarks.

On the Horizon: Voice-to-Text Technology

Looking ahead to developments in AT that could aid her GT/LD students, Marisa pinpoints the evolution of voice-to-text technology. “Voice-to-text technology could be a great solution for many of our kids who struggle with writing but can verbally explain themselves. Thus far, though, we’ve enjoyed only limited success with that technology, in terms of the equipment not working well and/or being incompatible with our system. With teenage voices changing a lot, voice recognition software can be challenging. Despite the current challenges it promises to be an effective solution for our kids and a relief to many of them.”

As for Marisa, she expects to maintain her burning enthusiasm for the field she has chosen for her career and for the children who make hard tasks look easy and easy tasks look hard. “It’s a sweet and sour paradox that whets my appetite for more,” she concludes.

RESOURCES

Articles

Attention Deficit Disorders and Gifted Students: What Do We Really Know?

Felice Kaufmann, M. Layne Kalbfleisch, F. Xavier Castellanos
LD Online -- 2000

This article summarizes and differentiates between what is known and what is assumed about ADHD in gifted students. The first part of the article focuses on how ADHD is assessed and diagnosed. Within this section, the authors discuss the four subtypes and the various symptoms that must be present to lead to a diagnosis. Next, the authors look at the question of diagnosis – is it ADHD or gifted, either or both? – and discuss the importance of looking past the question of “ADHD or gifted?” to focus on the degree to which a student is impaired by ADHD. The article concludes by recommending steps to take once a child has been diagnosed as ADHD and gifted.

<http://www.ldonline.org/article/5964>

Dual Exceptionalities

Colleen Willard-Holt LD Online -- 1999

“Identification of giftedness in students who are disabled is problematic,” Ms. Willard-Holt declares at the outset of her article. “The customary identification methods-standardized tests and observational checklists-are inadequate, without major modification. Standard lists of characteristics of gifted students may be inadequate for unmasking hidden potential in children who have disabilities,” she asserts. Since assessments are sometimes difficult to implement, Willard-Holt provides multiple lists providing characteristics of gifted students with specific disabilities. These lists focus on gifted students with visual impairments, physical disabilities, hearing impairments, learning disabilities and ADHD. Looking for these characteristics may help parents and teachers accurately identify gifted students, Willard-Holt claims. She provides a list of the following six questions to ask when differentiating between giftedness and ADHD:

- Could the behaviors be responses to inappropriate placement, insufficient challenge, or lack of intellectual peers?
- Is the child able to concentrate when interested in the activity?
- Have any curricular modifications been made in an attempt to change inappropriate behaviors?
- Has the child been interviewed? What are his/her feelings about the behaviors?
- Does the child feel out of control? Do the parents perceive the child as being out of control?
- Do the behaviors occur at certain times of the day, during certain activities, with certain teachers or in certain environments? <http://www.ldonline.org/article/5888>

Gifted Disabled Kids Get Exceptional Opportunities

By Jessica Wehrman

Scripps Howard News Service -- 2003

Wehrman paints a verbal picture of a classroom that consists of gifted and talented students with learning disabilities. “Fidgeting, shuffling, shifting, a blur of constant movement, Melissa Belkin’s class of gifted, talented and learning disabled students is a buzz of kinetic energy. Despite the unrelenting, boundless energy of students with attention deficit disorder, dyslexia and other learning issues, the Montgomery County, Md., class is surprisingly focused on the task at hand: what fall means to them. They’re coming up with a slew of images, some amazingly imaginative. One girl, looking at a picture of a farm girl carrying a broken rake, giggles. “It’s the grim reaper,” she says. Later these third- and fourth-graders will draw posters to reflect the season, but some will be more interested in other things. One group, markers in hand, will launch into a lengthy discussion of the constitutional requirements to be president.”

This, she writes, “is the world of the twice exceptional.” It’s a world, she notes, in which many of the students master math and science concepts at an early age but can barely spell. “Abstract concepts and images are easy to grasp but are mind-numbingly difficult to describe on paper.” The students’ problems are nothing new, she explains. “Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein and Leonardo DaVinci are all thought to have suffered from learning disabilities. The kids know this. There is no stigma in being both gifted and learning disabled, they say. They are proud of their talents.” Often easily bored with some classes and positively stumped by other concepts, a so-called “twice-exceptional” student is a challenge for teachers aiming to get all kids up to speed, the author writes. “In a smattering of school districts around the nation, school administrators are aiming to address a group that they say has been long neglected. These districts have developed special gifted/talented learning-disabled programs aimed at addressing skills and weaknesses at the same time.”

<http://www.knoxstudio.com/shns/story.cfm?pk=EDU-EXCEPTIONAL-10-21-03&cat=LS>

Gifted but Learning Disabled: A Puzzling Paradox

By Susan Baum - Kid Source Online

Ms. Baum is a leading authority on gifted and talented children with disabilities. Although written 7 years ago, her article remains the seminal text on GT/LD students and continues to be cited by experts in the field. Her article discusses how to categorize GT/LD students. She groups these children into three main categories:

- 1.) Identified gifted students who have subtle learning disabilities
- 2.) Unidentified students whose gifts and disabilities may be masked by average achievement
- 3.) Identified students with learning disabilities who are also gifted

After categorizing these students, Baum details her categorization criteria and discusses the curricular needs of these students. She writes, "Students who have difficulty with handwriting will ultimately fare much better if allowed to use a computer to record their ideas on paper than they will after years of remediation in handwriting. The following list outlines suggestions for providing compensation techniques to assist the student in coping with problematic weaknesses typical of the learning disabled student:

1. Find sources of information that are appropriate for students who may have difficulty reading. Some examples are visitations, interviews, photographs, pictorial histories, films, lectures, or experimentation. Remember, these children do not want the curriculum to be less challenging or demanding. Rather, they need alternative ways to receive the information
2. Provide advanced organizers to help students receive and communicate information. Students who have difficulty organizing and managing time also benefit from receiving outlines of class lectures, study guides, and a syllabus of topics to be covered. Teach students who have difficulty transferring ideas to a sequential format on paper to use brainstorming and webbing to generate outlines and organize written work. Provide management plans in which tasks are listed sequentially with target dates for completion. Finally, provide a structure or visual format to guide the finished product. A sketch of an essay or science project board will enable these students to produce a well-organized product
3. Use technology to promote productivity. Technology has provided efficient means to organize and access information, increase accuracy in mathematics and spelling, and enhance the visual quality of the finished product. In short, it allows students with learning disabilities to hand in work of which they can feel proud. Preventing these students from using word processing programs to complete all written assignments is like prohibiting blind children from using texts printed in Braille!
4. Offer a variety of options for communication of ideas. Writing is not the only way to communicate; all learning can be expressed and applied in a variety of modes. Slides, models, speeches, mime, murals, and film productions are examples. Remember, however, to offer these options to all children. Alternate modes should be the rule rather than the exception.
5. Help students who have problems in short-term memory develop strategies for remembering. The use of mnemonics, especially those created by students themselves, is one effective strategy to enhance memory. Visualization techniques have also proved to be effective. Resources are listed at the end of this digest.

http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/Gifted_learning_disabled.html

WEBSITES

Twice Gifted

The Twice Gifted Website features resources for gifted students with disabilities as well as for families and professionals who support them. The "Kids' Korner" highlights reading lists, online activities, contests and stories for children. Also spotlighted are famous GT/LD individuals throughout history whose talents illuminated their world.

<http://www.twicegifted.net/index.htm>

Uniquely Gifted

The Uniquely Gifted website provides resources for GT/LD families and children as well as information on specific disabilities, disability identification and the services to which GT/LD students and their families are entitled. A collection of introductory articles serves as a primer for families who are beginning their research.

<http://www.uniquelygifted.org/>

Teacher Vision: Crossover Children – LD and Gifted

This section of the Teacher Vision website features articles about gifted students who have learning disabilities. Users can read three articles cost-free before registering as a member.

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/special-education/gifted-education/5911.html>

FACT SHEETS

Gifted LD: Just the FAQs

Designed for us by families of GT/LD children, this fact sheet answers the following nine questions about gifted students with disabilities:

- 1.) What is a gifted LD student?
- 2.) Are there many gifted LD students?
- 3.) How and when are gifted LD students identified?
- 4.) Is it easy to assess LD in a gifted student?
- 5.) Are special ed services necessary for gifted LD students?
- 6.) Are there any services available other than special ed?
- 7.) How does a learning disability affect a gifted student outside of school?
- 8.) Do gifted students tend to have any special emotional or behavioral issues?
- 9.) What should a parent do?

http://www.hopkins.k12.mn.us/pages/north/ld_research/gifted_ld.htm

RESOURCE BOOKS

The Twice Exceptional Dilemma

The National Education Association -- 2005

This booklet addresses the specific challenges of the largest group of twice exceptional children: those students who have a disability and are also academically gifted. The guide addresses

identification considerations for students who are twice exceptional and provides common characteristics of GT/LD students. The authors describe obstacles and learning difficulties faced by these children and identify the roles and responsibilities of school districts for ensuring appropriate programming for twice exceptional students. In addition to the school districts, the booklet identifies the roles and responsibilities of teachers for addressing the needs of twice exceptional students.

<http://www.nea.org/specialed/images/twiceexceptional.pdf>

A Guidebook for Twice Exceptional Students: Supporting the Achievement of Gifted Students with Special Needs

Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools

Although designed to assist Montgomery County (MD) public school staff, parents and students in understanding the identification process of gifted students with special needs and accessing appropriate instruction, this publication has universal value for staff, parents and professionals nationwide. The guidebook describes the characteristics of the county's GT/LD population and defines twice exceptional terminology for the layman. The identification process is described in detail. A chart shows a comparison of characteristics of gifted students with or without disabilities. Ways to achieve success with these students are discussed and strength-based assessment, goals and best practices are outlined. Adaptations, accommodations and intervention techniques are pinpointed. Via charts and text the authors examine what works and what doesn't work for these students.

<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/enriched/gtld/docs/Twice%20Exceptional.pdf>

Twice-Exceptional Students: Gifted Students with Disabilities: An Introductory Resource Book -- 2006

Colorado Department of Education

This publication provides the framework for identifying twice exceptional students and selecting appropriate strategies for them. Multiple charts show characteristics of GT/LD students in comparison to other students, with distinguishing characteristics identified. The authors detail six steps to strategic planning for twice-exception students. Programming strategies and services are discussed. Differentiation strategies that teachers can use to help reach individual students are spotlighted.

Parents are advised about how they can aid their GT/LD child and are provided with a six-step process aimed at improving advocacy skills that may be useful when their GT/LD child is experiencing difficulties in school.

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/qt/download/pdf/TwiceExceptional-ResourceHandbook.pdf>

KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

NAGC defines a gifted person as someone who shows, or has the potential for showing,



an exceptional level of performance in one or more areas of expression. The NAGC website features a wealth of information and resources on all aspects of giftedness, plus access to publications and information on advocacy/legislation and upcoming conferences and seminars. The site also provides separate sections for parents, educators and professionals. Included in the NAGC resources is a lengthy and comprehensive article entitled "Twice Exceptional" (<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=973>) that details and defines issues related to twice exceptional children and provides additional topic-specific resources. For more information about NAGC, contact:

National Association for Gifted Children

1707 L Street, NW, Suite 550

Washington, DC 20036

Phone: (202) 785-4268

Fax: (202) 785-4248

Contact: Nancy Green CAE, Executive Director

Email: nagc@nagc.org

<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=31>

Gifted Development Center (GDC)

Affiliated with the Institute for the Study of Advanced



Development (ISAD), the GDC is a resource center for developmentally advanced children and their parents, and for gifted individuals of all ages, including twice exceptional children, gifted children with learning disabilities. The center provides in-depth assessment, counseling, consulting services and resource materials, expertise and experience with gifted issues. Since its founding in 1979, the GDC has helped more than 5,000 families to better understand and to nurture their children's development.

GDC assessment services include:

- Psychoeducational testing
- Diagnostic testing of twice exceptional learners
- Recommendations for accommodations throughout school, e.g., IEPs and 504 plans

- Guidance in school selection and grade placement
- Determining eligibility for special schools, programs and extra-curricular activities

Counseling services focus on:

- Acknowledgement of giftedness and exploration of its implications
- Being gifted and female
- Career and educational choices
- Dealing with psychological issues from a gifted viewpoint
- Reversing underachievement patterns
- Dealing with the unique issues of gifted, children and teens, including gifted children with learning disabilities

The ISAD (http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/About_GDC/isad.htm) is dedicated to the study of giftedness, advanced development and undeveloped potential in women. ISAD has accumulated case studies on more than 800 children with IQs above 160, the largest data bank on highly gifted children.

For additional information about the GDC, contact:
The Gifted Development Center
1452 Marion Street
Denver, CO 80218
Phone: (888) GIFTED1; (303) 837-8378
Fax: (303) 831-7465
Contact: Linda Silverman, Director
<http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/index.htm>

Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities

Based in Westport, CT, Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities focuses on parents of children with learning disabilities (LD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), providing them with action-oriented information via the organization's newsletter, website and educational programs.



The Smart Kids website offers general information about learning disabilities and ADHD, including signs and symptoms and dispelling myths and misconceptions. Success strategies for parents of children with learning disabilities are provided. The eight issues of the Smart Kids newsletter published each year provide information from experts, practical advice and support from other parents, and inspiration in profiles of high-achieving adults with LD and ADHD. The organization offers periodic workshops for both parents and students.

Smart Kids sponsors the annual Smart Kids Youth Achievement Award, which honors a young person with a learning disability or ADHD who has demonstrated initiative and determination resulting in a notable accomplishment in areas that include academics, music, art, athletics and community service. Winners are selected from among candidates nominated by the public each year.

To learn more about Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities, please contact:

Smart Kids
Phone: (203) 226-6831
Fax: (203) 226-4861
Contact: Jane B. Ross, M.S., Executive Director
<http://www.smartkidswithld.org/>

KidNeeds.com

New York City-based St. Mary's Healthcare System for Children



provides care to special infants, adolescents and families. The organization operates KidNeeds.com, a website that offers professional opinions on public health policy and advocacy efforts and links to programs, services and connections to families as well as products tailored for children with special needs.

The site's learning disabilities section provides users with access to articles on learning disabilities, including articles on twice exceptional children. The website also offers information on evaluations, technology, language and communication, plus emotional and behavioral concerns.

To learn more about KidNeeds.com, please visit their website at <http://kidneeds.com/> or contact them via e-mail at info@kidneeds.com.

LI-TECA

Long Island Twice Exceptional Children's Advocacy

The organization provides appropriate interventions for the social, emotional



and academic support of gifted children with learning disabilities. LI-TECA educates and informs parents, educators and professional care providers with research-based information. The organization's board members, most of whom are parents of twice exceptional children, have contributed to, authored and co-authored several published articles and have lectured about 2E children at schools and conferences. For

more information about LI-TECA, contact:

TECA

46 18th Avenue

Sea Cliff, LI, NY 11579

Phone: (516) 759-1624

Melissa Sornick, BSW, President

Email: twiceexceptional@hotmail.com

<http://li-teca.org/>

Brideun School for Exceptional Children



Located in Lafayette, CO, Brideun is one of only two schools nationwide developed specifically to meet the academic and emotional needs of gifted children with learning disabilities. Founded in 2001 by school psychologist Marlo Payne, Brideun serves children grades 1-8 and maintains a teacher/student of 1:8. The school's teaching style integrates learning, therapy and playful exploration. Through Brideun's contacts with the Boulder Network of Children's Professionals the school collaborates with psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, neuro-biofeedback specialists, nutritionists, pediatric optometrists audiologists and the treatment team at the Mapleton Center for Pediatric Rehabilitation. Brideun maintains close contact with the Gifted Development Center and numerous public and private schools.

For further information about the school, contact:

Brideun School

250 South Cherrywood Drive

Lafayette, CO 80026

Phone: (720) 890-2776

<http://www.brideun.com/>

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