

Growing up with Gifts and Talents: The Enigma of Twice Exceptional
A Research Poster

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Identification:

Currently, there is controversy over the identification of twice exceptional students.

- McCoach, , Kehle, Bray, and Siegle (2001) questioned the appropriateness of using profile analysis to identify students who are twice exceptional. The authors also questioned the validity of the masking hypothesis since many factors may influence the underachievement of students with high academic potential not solely the presence of a learning disability.
- Lovett & Lewandowski (2006) also questioned the validity of profile analysis and the use of the discrepancy model with this population. The authors observed: “However, as we have argued, the G/LD population is so poorly defined as to make it difficult to see who should be given access to these interventions” (p. 523).
 - The authors suggest the use of conservative criteria to define gifted-LD: IQ above 130 and achievement below 85.
- Assouline, Nicpon, and Whiteman (2010) questioned the validity of Lovett & Lewandowski’s criteria, conducted a study to characterize 2e students with written language disabilities (n=14) and found that comprehensive assessment utilizing multiple measures and informants is essential. McCoach et al. (2001) reached similar conclusions:
 - “To assess academic achievement, we recommend that school psychologists collect a child’s current level of functioning within the classroom environment as well as standardized measures of achievement. Measures of achievement within the classroom could include, but are not limited to, curriculum-based assessments, informal reading inventories, permanent product reviews of a student’s written work, and portfolio reviews” (p. 408).
- Lovett & Sparks (2010) have critiqued the assertions of Assouline et al. (2010) especially noting that they had not ruled out other factors that may have influence the unexpected underachievement of these students (motivational or lack of appropriate instruction). Assouline, Nicpon, & Whiteman (2011) have responded to the criticism of Lovett & Sparks (2010) by noting their attempts to rule out these confounds.
- While the use of multiple assessments is the most appropriate practice for identifying students with high academic potential and students with learning disabilities, there is not consensus over the appropriate measures to use or how to interpret whether the discrepancy between academic potential and academic performance is reflective of the presence of both an area of academic potential and an area of academic weakness caused by a learning disability.
- This reliance on tests is especially problematic as McCoach et al. (2001) noted that the information gathered from cognitive assessments does not inform effective intervention practices.
- In essence, the debate over how to identify gifted-LD students has devolved into a debate over how to interpret the significance of cognitive assessment results.

A New Definition for 2E:

The Joint Commission for Twice-Exceptional Learners (2009) has created the following the definition to serve as a guide for practitioners and researchers. This definition does not rely on cognitive or other assessments and thus can be operationalized to inform the selection of potential interventions.

- Twice-exceptional learners are students who have evidence of the potential for high achievement capability in areas such as specific academics; general intellectual ability; creativity; leadership; and/or visual, spatial, or performing arts
- AND also have evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria such as specific learning disabilities; speech and language disorders; emotional/behavioral disorders; physical disabilities; autism spectrum; or other health impairments, such as ADHD.
- Identification of twice-exceptional students requires comprehensive assessment in both the areas of giftedness and the disability as one does not preclude the other.
- Educational services must address both the high achievement potential as well as the deficits of this population of students.
- Twice-exceptional students require differentiated instruction, accommodations and/or modifications, direct services, specialized instruction, acceleration options, and opportunities for talent development.

- Twice-exceptional students require an individual education plan (IEP) or a 504 accommodation plan with goals and strategies that enable them to achieve growth at a level commensurate with their abilities, develop their gifts and talents, and learn compensation skills and strategies to address their disabilities.
- This comprehensive education plan must include talent development goals.

Compensating for LD:

- The results of several qualitative studies on adults and college students with learning disabilities has revealed that these individuals report the development of compensatory strategies as essential to their ability to achieve within higher education (Fink, 1998; Tanner, 2009; Reaser, Prevatt, Petscher, & Proctor, 2007; McGuire, Neu, & Reis, 1997).
- Further, several quantitative studies have demonstrated that college students with learning disabilities have similar ability/achievement when compared with college students without learning disabilities (Beneventi, Tonnessen, Ersland, & Hugdahl, 2010; Gregg et al. 2008; Birch & Chase, 2004; Ransby & Swanson, 2003). This research indicates that some students with learning disabilities are able to compensate for their reading disabilities.
- Several quantitative studies have documented those college students with learning disabilities report using a different pattern of study strategies than college students without learning disabilities (Kirby et al., 2008; Kovach & Wilgosh, 1999; Abrue-Ellis, Ellis, & Hayes, 2009; Corkett, Parilla, & Hein, 2006, Ruban, McCoach, McGuire, & Reis, 2003; Ruban & Reis, 2006). One qualitative study with Israeli secondary students (Givon & Court, 2010) and one quantitative study with a small sample of Norwegian secondary students (n=8) (Braten, Amundsen, & Samuelstein, 2010) offer preliminary evidence that school age children report using study strategies to compensate for their learning disabilities. This research has not explored how students with learning disabilities develop these strategies. While this research is not directly related to 2e students, it does inform potential directions for further research and interventions for this population.

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