

A PEATC

Do You Know....



Fact Sheet for Virginia's Professionals Working with Families Twice Exceptional Students

What is a Twice Exceptional Student?

A student considered twice exceptional is one who is both gifted and has learning challenges. A student, for example, can have superior skills in math or music, but cannot spell or has trouble writing due to learning disabilities. Many of these children go unidentified even though they may need extra support to be successful.

Twice exceptional students as defined by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) are: *“children, kindergarten through twelfth grade, who are identified as gifted by the identification and placement committee for the school division’s gifted education program and are also identified as a child with a disability as defined by Virginia’s special education regulations.”* These regulations implement the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in Virginia. There are no federal regulations for gifted education, but Virginia does have state regulations governing gifted education (See Resource list).

If a teacher, school staff, or parent suspects a disability, the student should be referred for a special education eligibility evaluation. A student cannot be denied an evaluation just because he has good grades or is passing tests. Further, if the student is not found eligible for special education, **he/she may be eligible for a 504 Plan** under the federal Rehabilitation Act which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and provides for instructional accommodations.

It is important that **teachers be trained to identify and work with twice exceptional students.** VDOE notes in its *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Document*.

“Twice-exceptional learners, students who are both gifted and have a disability, have been described as a group of underserved and under stimulated youth... it is difficult for educational professionals to reconcile the twice exceptional learner’s extreme strengths with their noticeable weaknesses. More often than not, one exceptionality overshadows the other. As a result of this inability....to see the whole child, the needs of twice-exceptional students might be overlooked.”

The *VDOE FAQ document* provides important information on the **characteristics** of twice exceptional students, the type of **assessment data** needed, the **parent role**, criteria for **identification**, **instructional strategies and accommodations** and more.

Resources on Twice Exceptional Students

Department of Education

Supporting the Identification and Achievement of the Twice Exceptional Student

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/gifted_ed/twice_exceptional.pdf

Regulations Governing Gifted Students

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/gifted_ed/gifted_regulations.pdf

Regulations Governing Special Educating Programs on Virginia

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/regulations/state/regs_spec_ed_disability_va.pdf

Understood.org

The Challenges of Twice Exceptional Kids

<https://u.org/3eDbqVN>

12 Questions to Ask the School about 2E Students

<https://u.org/2xMwEjF>

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Interventions for Twice Exceptional Students

There is no one test for identifying a twice exceptional child. Some clues that a student may be twice exceptional are that he/she simultaneously demonstrates **extraordinary talent in a particular area**, along with a **significant gap between performance and aptitude tests**, and/or may exhibit **signs of a processing disorder** (e.g., not able to follow directions).

A student's **giftedness in one area can mask struggles** in another. As a result, some twice exceptional students suffer from **anxiety or depression**. They may also be **bored with material** that is below their academic level and demonstrate that through inappropriate behavior. They may be seen as **not trying hard enough** and/or suffer from **low expectations** by teachers and parents and within themselves.

The **nature of services and supports** provided to the twice exceptional student is determined by the school's gifted *Identification and Placement Committee* and the special education *Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 team*. They must **address the student's learning challenges while providing for instruction that fosters intellectual and academic growth** and allows the student to work alongside age level peers. To facilitate success, the **gifted and special education staff** should both be involved in the education process for these students. The **parents and the student are important partners**.

There are many **instructional interventions and accommodations** that can assist twice exceptional students overcome barriers related to **reading, writing, organization and memory**. The *VDOE FAQ document* details potential assistive technology accommodations as well as information on instructional materials and interventions, assessment methods, and student study skills.

Whatever the interventions, it is important **to recognize and utilize each child's strengths** while providing the support they need to address their learning challenges. Schools should be **proactive in evaluating gifted students who are struggling** academically, emotionally, or socially. Students should be encouraged and **empowered to advocate for themselves** and to maintain high expectations for what they can achieve.

Myths about Twice Exceptional Children

*Directly excerpted from Understood.org--
<https://u.org/34Uk79R>*

1. **Being gifted** makes up for having a thinking or learning difference.
2. **Students can't be gifted and lack basic skills**, so they're just not trying hard enough.
3. **Twice exceptional students aren't eligible** for IEPs or 504 plans.
4. **Giftedness and challenges** can't be addressed at the same time.
5. **Addressing weaknesses** should be the top priority when helping twice exceptional students.
6. Twice exceptional students need accommodations **so they can't be in AP** (advanced placement) classes.
7. Twice exceptional students **should be more mature** than other kids their age.

PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

For more information about us, please contact:

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