**Dyslexia and Giftedness:**

**Signs and Symptoms of Twice Exceptionality**

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**What is the 2e Student?**

- Someone with an exceptional gift or talent in one or more area, with high potential to achieve
- And, someone who also has a learning disability that makes academic achievement difficult
- Most of these students are never identified as being twice exceptional. Either their giftedness or their disability is identified and becomes the focus, or neither are identified at all

**3 Types of 2e Students**

1. Students who have been identified as gifted yet exhibit difficulties in school
   - Often considered underachievers, and their underachievement may be attributed to poor self concept, lack of motivation, or laziness
   - Learning disabilities usually remain unrecognized for most of their educational lives. As school becomes more challenging, academic difficulties may increase causing them to fall behind, and someone finally suspects a disability.

2. Students whose learning disabilities are severe enough that they have been identified as having learning disabilities but whose exceptional abilities have never been recognized or addressed.
   - Inadequate assessments and/or depressed IQ scores often lead to an underestimation of these students' intellectual abilities.
   - Rarely referred for gifted/talented programs

3. Students whose giftedness and learning disabilities mask each other, and therefore neither are identified
   - Appear to be average students
• Aren’t recognized as struggling or not reaching their full potential because usually working “on grade level”

• May eventually be suspected of having a disability as coursework becomes more difficult

**Learning Disabilities**

• Individuals with LD may experience significant difficulties in one or a combination of areas of educational performance. IDEA 2004 identifies eight areas of underachievement: listening comprehension, verbal expression, basic reading skill, reading fluency, reading comprehension, written expression, mathematical computation, and mathematical problem solving. Although various disciplines identify aspects of LD using different terms, such as dyslexia, reading disorder, dyscalculia, math disability, dysgraphia, and disorders of written expression, there is agreement that these are types of LD. (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, March 2011)

• National prevalence rate of LD – 20%

• However, recent reports to Congress on IDEA usually show that about 5% of school-age children and youths are receiving services under the SLD category (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, March 2011)

• Majority of students with LD have Dyslexia

• Most 2e students “fall through the cracks” at school because they don’t perform “poorly enough” on standardized testing to be identified as having a Learning Disability

**Unidentified 2e Students Are At Risk**

2e students are atypical learners who are often characterized as smart students with school problems.

• They assume that learning tasks will be easy for them; are not prepared for difficulty

• This leads to frustration, tension, and fear that eventually becomes defensiveness.

• They often tend to be aggressive, careless, and frequently off-task.

• They may also cause classroom disturbances and seem deficient in tasks emphasizing memory and perceptual abilities. In other areas, their learning characteristics resemble those of high ability students (excel at assignments involving abstract thinking and problem solving) (Baum, 1984a, 1984b; Baum & Owen, 1988).

• High ability/learning disabled (LD) students perceive themselves as deficient more frequently in academic areas, which most likely increases their motivation to avoid school tasks.
• They may feel shy and perceive themselves as less effective in school.
• They become discouraged due to continuously experiencing failure in school while learning and creating successfully at home. This often leads to poor academic self-concept.

In order for the 2e student to be successful and reach their full potential:
• Both gifts and disabilities must be identified as well as supported
• Inappropriate or insufficient instruction and accommodation puts the student at high risk for school failure
• When properly identified and supported, the struggles faced by the 2e student are avoidable

What is Dyslexia? Don’t Believe the Myths!

Common Myths

• Myth - People with Dyslexia see things backwards
  Fact – mixing up letters and making reversals is the result of auditory processing differences and a poor visual memory for flat, 2-dimensional objects

• Myth – People with Dyslexia can’t read
  Fact – People with Dyslexia CAN read, but only up to a certain point. They usually hit a brick wall in reading by 3rd grade. Reading is the WORST way to identify students with Dyslexia early. The BEST way is to look for exceptionally bad spelling (but don’t rely on weekly spelling tests).

• Myth – People with Dyslexia have a low IQ
  Fact – Dyslexia is not correlated with IQ. In fact, many people with Dyslexia are very bright. Intellectually gifted individuals can have Dyslexia, however they are often unidentified.

• Parents and/or teachers may fail to notice both giftedness and Dyslexia:
  - Dyslexia may mask giftedness
  - Giftedness may mask Dyslexia
Myth – Dyslexia is rare

Fact – The NIH research conducted on Dyslexia estimates that 20% of the general population has Dyslexia. So, 1 out of every 5 students is Dyslexic. Severity ranges from mild to profound. Many people with mild to moderate Dyslexia are never diagnosed.

So, What is Dyslexia?

- Dyslexia is an inherited condition
- Due to a difference in physical brain structure
- Process language differently
- Impacts directionality
- Impacts the ability to memorize certain things like sequences and rote, random facts

Research Based Definition of 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 and decoding abilities.

These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.

Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge

(Adopted by the International Dyslexia Association, 2002)

Could it be Dyslexia?

Look for the Classic warning signs – Must have 3 or more

- Language Processing

Dyslexia is a language processing problem.

People with Dyslexia have trouble with language processing in all 4 ways we process language.
1. Auditory Processing

- Smaller auditory memory size
- Slower auditory processing
- Auditory discrimination problems (f/th)
- Poor phonemic awareness
- Language Processing cont.

2. Oral Speech

- Speech delay
- Trouble with articulation (r/l, m/n)
- Mixing up sounds and syllables in long words
- Stuttering

3. Reading

4. Written Expression, Spelling and Handwriting

**More Early Warning Signs**

- Directionality confusion – right/left, above/below, over/under, time concepts
- Late to establish dominant hand
- Difficulty learning to tie shoes
- Can’t create words that rhyme by age 4
- Trouble memorizing the alphabet letter names and sounds
- Trouble memorizing address, phone number, spelling of their last name

**Odd Reading**

- Can read a word on one page and then not recognize the same word on another page
- Difficulty sounding out unknown words, even though they know phonics
- Be careful – often gifted students with Dyslexia are reading at or above grade level, especially on silent reading comprehension
• If giftedness includes a strong visual memory, they will be able to memorize more words by shape than their same age peers with Dyslexia

Terrible Spelling
• Can pass weekly spelling tests with a lot of hard work and practice, but trouble retaining what is learned once the test is over
• Flunks inventive spelling
• Often writes words with incorrect vowels, or no vowels at all

Dysgraphia
• Odd pencil grip
• Can’t make letters sit on the line consistently
• Inconsistent slant of tall letters
• Odd beginning and ending points
• Inconsistent letter sizes, difficulty with descenders
• Odd use of space between words
• Trouble copying from the board
• Difficulty learning cursive
• Dysgraphia often comes with Dyslexia, but not always
• Also associated with ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorders
• Dysgraphia is one of the most common ways that a gifted student with Dyslexia is identified – there is an obvious discrepancy between their intelligence/oral expression and their poor written expression

Strengths
Because of their larger right brain hemisphere, people with Dyslexia are usually gifted in one or more of these areas:
• Art (including design, graphics, sculpture etc.)
• Athletics
- Music
- People skills
- Mechanical skill, good logic
- 3-D visualization
- Creative thinking

**What Won’t Work for Dyslexia**

- Hooked on Phonics (or *any* phonics program)
- Reading Recovery
- Accelerated Reader
- Vision Therapy or Colored Overlays
- Brain Gym (or any other physical exercises or cognitive/developmental exercises or therapy)
- Fast ForWord
- Sylvan, Huntington or Kumon Centers
- Ron Davis – The Gift of Dyslexia
- Special Diets or medicine

**Tutoring That Works**

- Orton-Gillingham
  - If the student is ready for it
  - 85% are ready
- Lindamood-Bell LiPS®
  - If they are not ready for OG
References


The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) – [www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org)

Bright Solutions for Dyslexia – [www.brightsolutions.us](http://www.brightsolutions.us)