



# Identifying and Serving Twice Exceptional Children: Best Practices and the Bottom Line

Office for Exceptional Children · February 29, 2016

**Ohio** | Department  
of Education



# What is Twice Exceptional?

**Student has more than one exceptionality, most often giftedness**

**Has one of the disabilities from the 13 disability categories under the IDEA**

# Disability Categories

- Autism
- Blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impaired
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

# Categories of Giftedness

- Superior Cognitive
- Reading/ Writing
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Creative Thinking
- Visual Art
- Dance
- Drama/Theater
- Music



# Which areas of Twice Exceptionality are most likely in your classroom?

Autism and Gifted

Specific Learning Disability and Gifted

Other Health Impaired and Gifted



# Common Characteristics of Twice Exceptional Students

	Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder	Specific Learning Disability	Autism Spectrum Disorder (Asperger)
<b>Academics</b>	Difficulty beginning or finishing tasks  Strength in critical and creative thinking	Strength in one area but not in another (ex: strong vocabulary but poor reader, etc.)	Normal cognitive development  Intense focus on a particular topic
<b>Attention</b>	Fidgets and trouble staying seated Easily distracted	Overactive or inactive Easily distracted	Repetitive patterns of behavior
<b>Organization</b>	Difficulty following directions and keeping on task	Difficulty understanding and following directions or planning tasks	Difficulty with transitions or unknowns
<b>Social</b>	Difficulty understanding social cues	May have difficulties with social contexts	Difficulty developing peer relationships and lack of empathy
<b>Behavior</b>	Interrupts or blurts out Impulsive	Oppositional as a coping strategy	Emotionally fragile (meltdowns, etc.)



# Challenges in Identifying Twice Exceptional Students

Giftedness can mask disability

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Disability can mask giftedness

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Both exceptionalities can mask each other

# Why should we be concerned?

At greater risk for underachievement

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At increased risk for developing social and emotional problems

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Regression in ability may be seen over time





# Red Flags for Twice Exceptional

- Uneven classroom performance
- Capable but disorganized
- Inability to initiate tasks
- Social anxiety or other social factors leading to lack of participation

# Red Flags for Twice Exceptional

Subtest score discrepancies

- Clinically significant
- Even in “average to advanced” range

Differences between whole group and individually administered assessments

# Serving Twice Exceptional, Rights and Responsibilities





# Federal Government Guidance

- Federal Register
- Office of Civil Rights
- Office of Special Education Programs

## Federal court cases

–Mr. I and Mrs. I v. Maine School  
Administrative District No. 55

# What does our state say?

Consult with school psychologist to select test

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Use allowable accommodations from IEP or 504 on tests

# What does our state say?

Certain assessments allow the use of a General Abilities Index (GAI) instead of the full-scale IQ

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Use strength based planning





# Identifying Twice Exceptional Students

*Intrapersonal versus Normative*

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Important to evaluate areas of strength as well as areas of weakness

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Strengths and weaknesses revealed through comprehensive evaluation



# Comprehensive Evaluation

**Should be in-depth assessments of both strengths and weaknesses**

- Observations
- Portfolio assessments
- Performance over time
- Samples of classwork
- Samples from work done outside of the school setting, particularly in an area of strength for the student
- Other assessment data



# Strength Based Planning

- Necessary to develop weaknesses through strengths
- Include educators from both gifted and special education
- Resources for Strength Based Planning:
  - Appendix D from [ODE's Twice Exceptional Guide](#)
  - [Belin Blank Center's guide](#) for working with twice exceptional students

# Role of the Classroom Teacher





# Classroom Teacher is Key


Twice Exceptional students are easily overlooked

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When a change in performance expectation occurs, twice exceptional should be considered

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Instructional practices can either create or eliminate obstacles



# Strategies for Teaching Twice Exceptional Students

- Incorporate student interests
- Vary teaching style
- Front-load instruction
- Chunk learning or directions
- Use curriculum compacting for areas of strength
- Scaffold instruction in areas of weakness
- Time-based accommodations
- Assist with organizational weaknesses
- Allow for alternative ways to demonstrate learning
- Minimize social stressors
- Provide quiet spaces



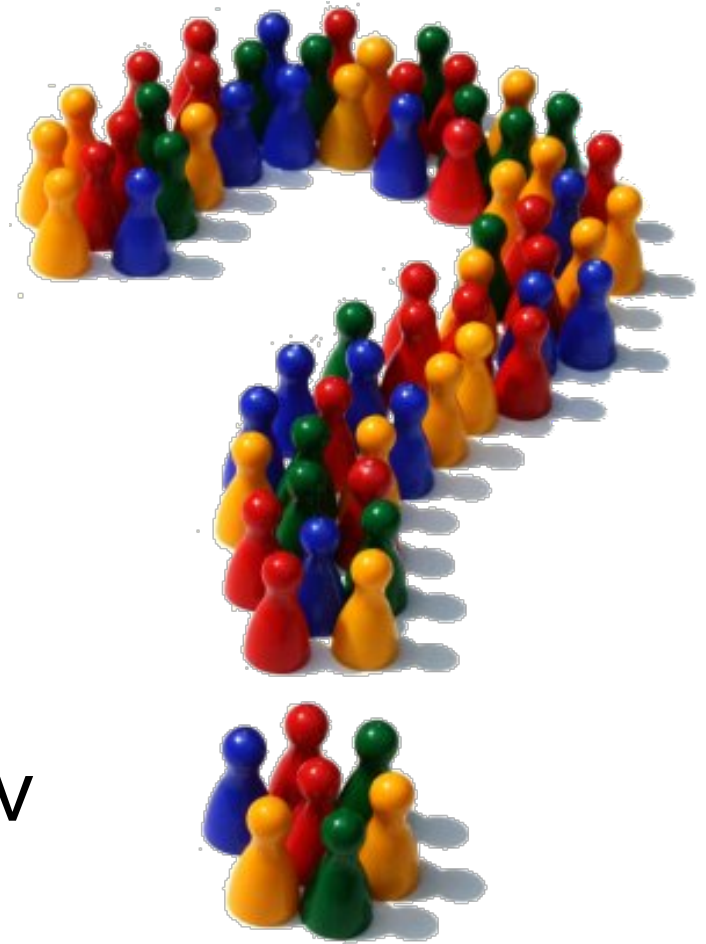
# Other Considerations

Seek out opportunities for professional development

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Encourage collaboration between gifted education, special education and general education teachers

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