

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL (2e)?

2e students have exceptional talents while also experiencing learning disabilities such as ADHD, autism, and dyslexia. They often have deep passions and strengths and shine in those areas, but are sometimes seen as lazy or obstinate outside of their interests.

2e IDENTIFICATION MATTERS!

Even if they perform at grade level, 2e students are overtaxed using their gifts to compensate for their disability, or underperform if their disability masks their gifts.

2e students develop asynchronously. For example, a 4th grader may:

- Understand math at a 7th grade level
- Write at a 2nd grade level
- Socialize at a 1st grade level
- Reason at a 12th grade level

Developmental asynchrony often results in anxiety and depression; students may feel deficient despite having incredible intellectual and creative strengths. When combined with sensory overstimulation and impulse control issues, children may experience behavioral challenges in the classroom.

*With proper support,
2e students can
reach their potential,
shine in their classrooms,
and become amazing future
contributors to society.*

WHAT THEY FEEL

MISUNDERSTOOD
TEASED PRESSURED DIFFERENT
UNDERVALUED LONELY ANXIOUS
DEPRESSED NOT GOOD ENOUGH
OVER/UNDER STIMULATED
PRETENDING TO BE "NORMAL"

WHAT YOU SEE

Acting impulsively, acting out
Attempting to escape tasks
Pacing, fidgeting, doodling
Looking away, distracted
Trying to self-regulate
Wandering by themselves
Blurting out answers
Shutting down



Top tips for working with 2e kids

LET THEIR STRENGTHS SHINE

Ask children and parents to identify strengths and interests, then build on these to unlock their potential.

BE CURIOUS AND EMPATHETIC

There is always a logic to frustrating behavior. 2e kids don't intend to give teachers a hard time, rather they are having a hard time.

ADJUST LEVEL TO ASYNCHRONOUS DEVELOPMENT

Even though 2e children are bright, they cannot master every subject at the same level or pace.

COLLABORATE WITH THEIR TEAM

Ask parents, previous teachers, and their psychologists, behaviorists, etc. to learn what works.

Changemakers

Greta Thunberg
Climate Activist
AUTISM



Steve Jobs
Entrepreneur
DYSLEXIA



Simone Biles
Olympic Gymnast
ADHD



2e CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

We asked parents of 2e children to brainstorm common challenges their children face and suggest solutions they have found that work to address those challenges. Parents know that a teacher's job is incredibly challenging and that asking an educator to embark on the journey of supporting 2e kids is not a small task - the good news is that these solutions can help ALL kids! And remember - *you are not alone!* Partner with the parents, special ed team, counselors, psychologists, behaviorists, and the student to understand behaviors, implement a plan, and establish routines.

CHALLENGE	SOLUTIONS
Student lacks motivation	Relate strengths and interests to the work; differentiate material
Can't sit still	Address underlying reason - anxiety, sensory, focus; allow movement breaks or other non-distracting way to address this need, as it helps some to learn
Sensory overload, withdrawal	Offer sensory breaks, headphones for noise cancelling, quiet workspot, take a walk outside, work in resource room; examine environment to identify potential changes
Meltdowns	Pick and choose battles; offer sensory breaks, headphones, quiet workspot; contact district behaviorist
Child won't start / takes too long to complete work	Provide accommodations: keyboarding, dictation, extra time, fewer problems, verbal brainstorm with teacher taking notes, joint storytelling, graphic organizers
Fear of failure	Address any perfectionism - 2e kids can be their own harshest critics
Organization / executive function challenges	Designate a place for each item (e.g., binder, folder, with color code), use a calendar, encourage to-do lists; strategically pair peers for project work
Lack of understanding / acceptance by peers	Modulate teacher reaction to behavior so it doesn't stand out; connect kids with quirky interests; encourage inclusion to minimize bullying
Bored in a subject / subject too easy	Differentiate - set faster pace, avoid rote repetitive work, require fewer problems; provide puzzles, creative projects, complex problems
Finishes work early	Designate a book, journal, doodling, or special project
Difficulty with group work	Pair with supportive peers, assign clear roles, create group work skills checklist (e.g. share one idea, listen to one idea)
Social challenges	Create friendship circles, work with school psychologist and speech language pathologist to offer social skills groups
Low self-esteem	Celebrate their accomplishments, give them chances to shine and lead in their areas of strength
Traditional assessments don't display child's full capabilities	Allow for a variety of ways to show mastery - written, spoken, video, comic book, etc. as long as they show they are mastering the key points