



Learning Links

**“Twice Exceptional”
When your child
is gifted *and* has a
learning difference**



lee pesky learning center

“Twice Exceptional”

When your child is gifted *and* has a learning difference

Many intellectually gifted children and adults - up to 20% - also have a specific learning difference, such as dyslexia, an attention problem, or another challenge such as Asperger’s syndrome. Imagine the frustration that comes from being highly intelligent, yet struggling in certain subjects in school or having difficulty staying focused and organized. If unidentified or unsupported, the Twice Exceptional (or “2E”) individual can begin to doubt her intelligence and competence. For this individual, academic success can be elusive. To help support the 2E learner, parents and teachers must understand not just giftedness and learning differences, but also the unique interaction of the two traits.

What does it mean to be gifted?

You know your child is very bright. Formal testing confirms that your child is gifted, but what exactly does that mean? Even the experts differ on defining giftedness. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) says that a gifted person is “someone who shows, or has the potential for showing, an exceptional level of performance in one or more areas of expression.” Being gifted means more than simply having a high score on an IQ test. In fact, an IQ test is just one measure that gives us a glimpse of your child’s learning profile. The following is a partial list of qualities that may be exhibited by gifted individuals:

- Develops an advanced vocabulary at an especially early age
- Exhibits strong curiosity
- Uses critical thinking skills, recognizes connections, and is a good problem-solver
- Understands abstract concepts
- Displays exceptional talent and interest in music, art, athletics, dance, or drama
- Feels the need to be “perfect”

How does a learning disability change the landscape?

One hallmark of any type of learning difference is variability in skills and abilities. The definition of a learning disability implies that some things come very easily and other tasks pose unexpected and seemingly contradictory challenges. When an individual is gifted *and* has a learning disability, the inconsistency in skills can be even more extreme. He may wonder why his classmates, who may not understand what he's talking about, seem to have such an easy time with tasks that are challenging for him. At home, it may seem that your 2E child is quite mature in some ways but is immature in other ways. This can be frustrating for both you and your child.

How can you help?

- Encourage your child to pursue activities or learning opportunities that fuel natural enthusiasm for learning.
- Help your child set realistic goals and avoid the pitfalls of perfectionism. Foster a sense of accomplishment that is based on personal satisfaction, not necessarily a grade or an award. Remember that meaningful self-worth is tied to who your child *is*, not what she *accomplishes*.
- Be willing to advocate for your child's needs. While all children need this support, the 2E child can be especially perplexing to educators: "Why can't he write a sentence when he just read a book 4 years above his grade level?"
- Lay a strong foundation for self-advocacy by helping your child truly understand his learning profile – his strengths as well as his challenges.
- Balance your child's need to be challenged with reasonable expectations given her unique learning profile. Provide and advocate for accommodations that help your child thrive.
- If a learning difference is suspected, seek an assessment at school or Lee Pesky Learning Center.

Assessment, Academic Intervention, and Counseling services are available at Lee Pesky Learning Center for all students who face learning challenges. For more information about our services and support resources call Lori Sirs, LCSW at 208-577-1106.

Suggested reading list:

Coping for Capable Kids: Strategies for Parents, Teachers, and Students.

Cohen, L. & Frydenberg, E. Prufrock Press: Waco, TX.

Parenting Gifted Kids. Delisle, J. (2006). Prufrock Press: Waco, Texas. **

Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities: Overcoming Obstacles and Realizing Potential. Weinfeld, R., Jeweler, S., Barnes-Robinson, L. & Shevitz, B. (2006) Prufrock Press: Waco, TX.

Stick up for Yourself! Kaufman, G., Raphael, L., & Espeland, P.

The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook. Galbraith, J. (2000).

The Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Kids: Understanding and guiding their development. Cross, T. (2005). Prufrock Press: Waco, Texas. **

They Say My Kid's Gifted: Now What? Olenchak, F. (1998). National Association for Gifted Children: Washington, D.C. **

What's Bad About Being Too Good? Miriam, Ph.D., E. Mariam, Ph.D., A., & Price, C.

** Available for check-out in the Family Resource Library at Lee Pesky Learning Center

For additional information on meeting your “twice exceptional” child’s social and emotional needs, please visit the following websites:

2e Twice Exceptional Newsletter - www.2enewsletter.com - advice for parents of twice exceptional children.

Books and resources for gifted students designed for parents, teachers, and students - www.prufrock.com

Learning Disabilities Online - www.ldonline.org

National Association for Gifted Children - www.nagc.org

Schwab Learning - www.schwablearning.org

The Frostig Center: Success for children with learning disabilities - www.ldsuccess.org

Twice Exceptional Kids - www.twiceexceptionalkids.com



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