



# Nebraska Department of Education

500 S. 84<sup>th</sup> St ♦ Lincoln, Nebraska ♦ 68510

## High Ability Learning

May 2021

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### Twice Exceptional Students with Guest Author Jude Matyo-Cepero



This month's newsletter was written by a special guest and expert in the area of twice exceptionality, Jude Matyo-Cepero, Ph.D, NBCT. Dr. Matyo-Cepero is an Associate Professor at the University of Nebraska Kearney. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate level courses in Gifted Education, Autism and Exceptional Education Research. Dr. Cepero is the recipient of the Lewis Professorship for Gifted Education and is the Director of Gifted Education at the University of Nebraska Kearney. Her research interests include Advocacy, Gifted, Autism, Multi-exceptional education, and Teacher Preparation.



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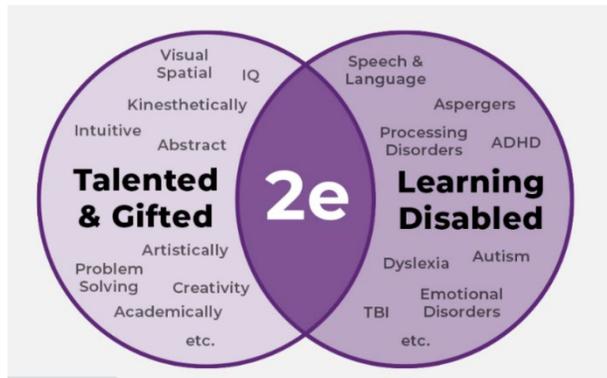
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## Introduction to Twice Exceptional



Twice Exceptional (2E) is defined by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) as, “gifted children who, have the characteristics of gifted students with the potential for high achievement and give evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria. These disabilities may include specific learning disabilities (SpLD), speech and language disorders, emotional/behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, autism spectrum, or other impairments such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).”

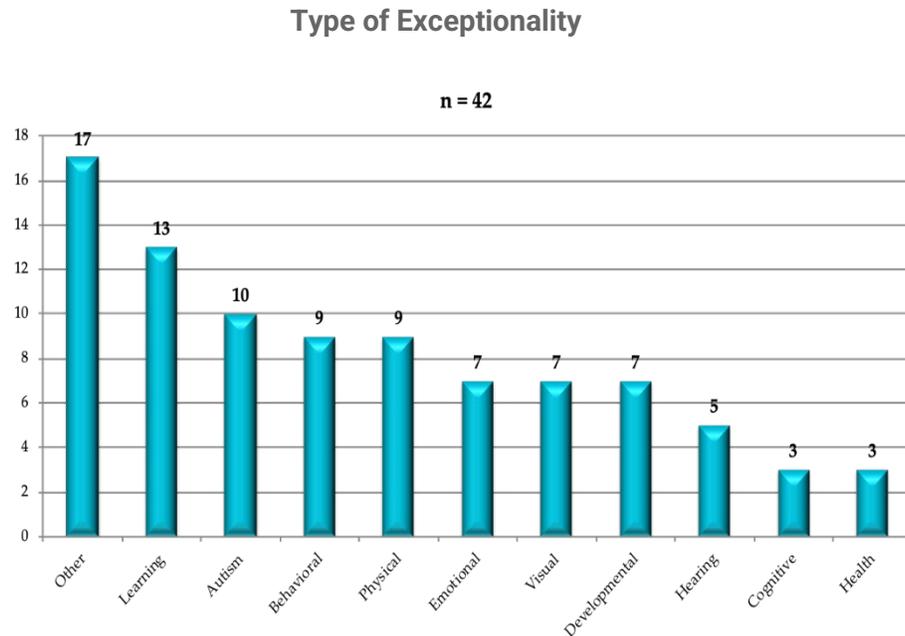
While 2E students may display typical characteristics of giftedness, they may also display signs of cognitive or affective challenges. Some indicators, as written by Nielsen & Higgins (1994), may include:

- Have discrepant verbal and performance abilities.
- Have deficient or extremely uneven academic skills which cause them to lack academic initiative, appear academically unmotivated, avoid school tasks, and frequently fail to complete assignments.
- Are extremely frustrated by school.
- Have auditory and/or visual processing problems which may cause them to respond slowly, to work slowly, and to appear to think slowly.
- Have problems with long-term and/or short-term memory.
- Are easily frustrated; give up quickly on tasks; are afraid to risk being wrong or making mistakes.
- Are distractable; unable to maintain attention for long periods of time.
- Are unable to control impulses.
- Have poor social skills; demonstrate antisocial behaviors.

As Dr. Matyo-Cepero will explain, this can make 2E students extremely difficult to identify, especially if we do not have strong systems in place. When a student is identified for Special Education, we often fail to look at them as candidates for High Ability programs. Understanding twice exceptionality and how it presents in our classrooms is crucial to ensure we are serving students in all capacities.



## Twice-Exceptional Children: *Lifting the Mask*



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The saying “parents are their child’s first teachers” is a phrase parents often hear. This phrase represents so many things, particularly to those parents who are raising twice exceptional children (2e). But what does the term “twice exceptional” really mean? Some twice exceptional gifted children are not easily identified as a result of the “masking effect”. According to Buica-Belciu & Popovici (2014) the term *twice exceptional* must be credited to James J. Gallagher (2004) to make a distinction between those individuals who were recognized as being gifted learners but how also presented a recognized additional exceptionality (p.520). Dare and Nowicki (2015) point to the confusion of recognizing twice exceptional children because of the unusual mix of strengths and weaknesses co-existing within an individual learner (Mollenkopf, Matyo-Cepero, Lewis, Irwin & Joy 2021, p. 84). Bracamonte (2010) states that common characteristics of twice-exceptional learners include: “discrepancy between expected and actual achievement; evidence of an outstanding talent or ability and evidence of a processing deficit” (davidsongifted.org, 2010).



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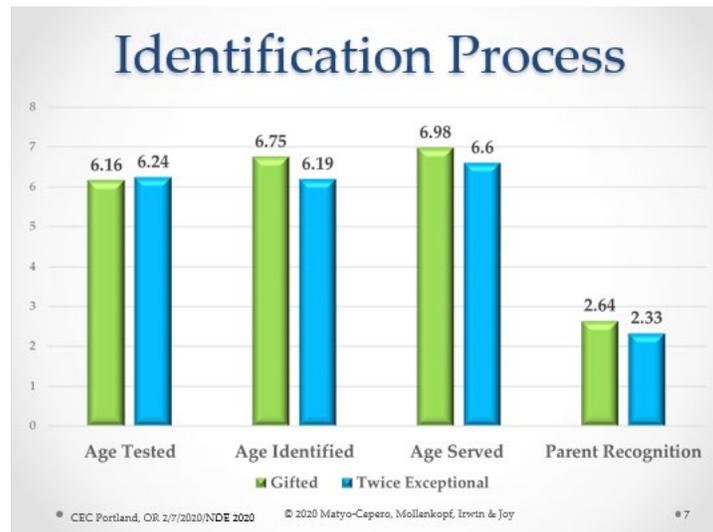


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Research presented at the 2020 Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), The Association for the Gifted (TAG) division by Mollenkopf, Matyo-Cepero & Irwin, indicated that the mother was the first to identify her twice exceptional child as gifted before the child's third birthday. Unfortunately, the same research study found that twice exceptional children began to receive services at 6.6 years old (CEC/TAG, 2020).



The school referral process for identifying twice exceptional learners is also challenging as teachers and schools/districts might have preconceived ideas concerning student expectations at specific grade/age levels (Missett, Asana, Callahan & Landrum, 2016). School districts are left to wrestle with the removing of the mask in the identification/verification process of the twice exceptional child while also addressing the concerns and support sought by parent advocates on behalf of their child. Josephson, Wolfgang & Mehrenberg (2018) suggest the following to establish guidelines for schools to support all in those working with the twice exceptional learners:

- The gifted instructor- ensures that the twice exceptional learner is not bored, incorporates higher order thinking work, and ensures that the twice exceptional learner's gifted exceptionality is being challenged.
- The special education instructor- ensures that supports are in place for the twice-exceptional student and that IEP goals, and that accommodations are appropriate to support those goals.
- The general education instructor- supports the twice exceptional learner by ensuring the instruction/curriculum/environment is differentiated and the student is able to interact with like aged/grade peers.
- All instructors-Supporting the home environment to ensure that communication with parents/guardians is open and that they are invited to be actively involved in the school/district planning for the twice exceptional learner, as well as serving as a resource for the social/emotional needs that exist beyond the classroom/school environment.



Ultimately it is the communication and commitment to a collaborative working relationship between school and home that will provide the best supports, academic, emotional, and social, for lifting the mask of twice exceptional learners and allowing them the opportunity to reach their maximum potential.

## Updates and Events



### **High Ability Learners and Perfectionism Webinar:**

Join us on June 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm (CST) for a family-oriented webinar about perfectionism in High Ability Learners. This session will discuss perfectionism, its pitfalls, and how families and educators can help HAL students manage perfectionism. This event is FREE to all, so make sure you register! To sign up, click [here](#).

### **Nebraska Association for Gifted Virtual Summer Series:**

The Nebraska Association for Gifted will be hosting a 2-day virtual conference, sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Education. There will be six, two-hour sessions featuring nationally and internationally renowned speakers. Presenters include Scott Peters, April Wells, Tamra Stambaugh, Andi McNair, Brian Housand, and Matt Fugate. The speakers will cover topics such as equity, identification, differentiation tools and strategies and more for only \$35! Mark your calendars for July 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. You don't want to miss this! Register [here](#).

### **Differentiation for High Ability Learners Survey:**

Did you watch a live session or recording of the Spring webinar series: Differentiation for High Ability Learners? If so, please take a moment to fill out this [brief survey](#). This will help us better plan for future events and make your experience better! Additionally, this data will be presented at the NAGC conference in a presentation on the effectiveness of the webinar series format. PLEASE take a moment to answer the questions!



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