
Grade Skipping: Making It Right for 2e Students

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- I. Snapshot of Twice-exceptionality
 - II. Barriers 2e Students Face
 - III. Meet Gianna
 - IV. Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)
 - V. Importance of Support
 - VI. Individualization for Gianna
 - VII. Social & Emotional Concerns
 - VIII. What I Hope to Communicate
 - IX. Perspectives on Gianna's Acceleration
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Twice Exceptional Students

The term twice exceptional, often abbreviated as 2e, refers to gifted children who have some form of disability.

This population possess strengths on one end of normal curve as well as deficits on the other end.

U.S. Department of Education, suggest that there are approximately 360,000 twice-exceptional students in America's Schools

The reauthorization of IDEA (IDEA-2004), which recognized through new regulations, that children who are gifted and talented may also have disabilities led to more awareness of this population.

“I think this is a gross underestimate once we consider all of the varied ways a child can have serious learning challenges coupled with extraordinary strengths.” Scott Barry Kaufman

Twice Exceptional Students

Partner Culprits: Storehouse of Data & Definition

Lack of any federal agency gathering data bases for 2e students leaves us unsure of the prevalence of twice-exceptionality.

Unlike special education's excellent definitions for disabilities, there is no single definition of twice-exceptional. Without an agreed upon definition, hard to get agreed upon best practices.

Twice Exceptional Students

1) Twice-exceptional learners are students who give evidence of the potential for high achievement capability in areas such as specific academics; general intellectual ability; creativity; leadership; AND/OR visual, spatial, or performing arts AND also give evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria such as specific learning disabilities; speech and language disorders; emotional/behavioral disorders; physical disabilities; autism spectrum; or other health impairments, such as ADHD.

2) This term refers to the fact that this group of gifted children are exceptional both because of their strengths and because of their limitations. Coupled with high intelligence, these children also may have one or more learning disabilities, attention deficit, autism spectrum disorder, emotional or behavior problems, or other types of learning challenges.

3) Students who possess talent in one or more domains (e.g., academic, visual arts, or performing arts) some and also have an identified disability. The disability is anything that gets in the way of fully actualizing a talent domain(s). The most researched disability areas are ADHD, learning disabilities, and autism. ***Megan Foley-Nicpon introduces a more broad view by also including physical disabilities and any mental health concerns (e.g., anxiety, depression.)

4) Twice exceptional (2e) individuals evidence exceptional ability and disability, which results in a unique set of circumstances. Their exceptional ability may dominate, hiding their disability; their disability may dominate, hiding their exceptional ability; each may mask the other so that neither is recognized or addressed. 2e students, who may perform below, at or above grade level, require the following:

- Specialized methods of identification that consider the possible interaction of the exceptionalities
- Enriched/advanced educational opportunities that develop the child's interests, gifts and talents while also meeting the child's learning needs
- Simultaneous supports that ensure the child's academic success and social-emotional well-being, such as accommodations, therapeutic interventions, and specialized instruction.

Working successfully with this unique population requires specialized academic training and ongoing professional development.

Key similarities: Potential, Domains, Strengths, Deficits, Symbiotic Uniqueness

Twice Exceptional Students

Strengths among 2e students are varied. (Many times these are discovered or affirmed through standardized measures.)

Typical areas of deficit among 2e students are:

Adaptive skills
Behavioral control
Long term planning
Organization
Participation
Processing speed
Social Skills
Working memory
Writing skills

***Classrooms demand these. What does a deficit(s) do for student self-efficacy and engagement in school?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Impairments in social communication and interaction
Restrictive and repetitive patterns of interests, behaviors, or activities

Gifted individuals with ASD possess these PLUS:

- 1.) Dichotomies that are difficult for schools and families to understand
 - 2.) Extreme depth of knowledge AND little understanding of social norms
 - 3.) Symptoms of depression, inattention, hyperactivity, and difficulty in coping with change, but children/adolescents often do not report similar experiences
 - 4.) Cognitive very high verbal ability and relative deficits in short term memory and absolute deficits in ability to process information (short term memory and processing speed correlate positively with mathematics and reading achievement; and identification for programming for gifted and talented)
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Let's Meet Gianna

The Belin Blank Center found in one study that over 50% of 2e students would benefit from acceleration.

Gianna is only one of these!

The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)

The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS), 3rd Edition is a tool to help schools make effective decisions regarding the appropriateness of a grade-skip and/or subject-based acceleration.

It guides a child study team (including educators, administrators, teachers, parents, and other professionals) through a discussion of the academic and social characteristics of the student.

“Trust the scale.”

The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)

Comprised of 10 Sections

S1 = General information (student and family)

S2 = School History (services and areas of demonstrated high ability)

S3 = Critical items (ability baseline, sibling grade placements, candidate's attitude)

S4, 5, 6 = Academic Ability, Aptitude, and Achievement (standardized testing)

S7 = School and Academic Factors (placement considered, sibling placement, attendance, motivation, attitude toward learning, school extra-curriculars, academic self-concept)

S8 = Development factors (age, size, coordination)

S9 = Interpersonal Skills (emotional development, behavior, relationships, non-school extra-curriculars)

S10 = Attitude and Support (student, parent, school system)

Maximum score is 80 points

Critical Items:

- The student's ability (as measured by IQ) – minimum 115
 - Acceleration would result in moving into the same grade as a sibling
 - The student is currently in the same grade as a sibling
 - Student indicates that he/she does not want to accelerate.
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The Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)

Benefits of the IAS:

- A more objective perspective of student
- An analysis of the major factors to be considered in making a decision
- Documentation of the student's strengths and concerns
- A numerical range to guide the discussion and decision of acceleration
- A standard of comparison with students who have had successful accelerations
- Promotes discussion among key stakeholders
- Comprehensive guide, case studies, and sample completed scales

Excellent candidate for whole grade acceleration = **60-80 points** (75% or more of points possible)

Good candidate for whole grade acceleration = **46-59 points** (At least 57.5% of points possible)

Total point score = 35-45 points marginal candidate; 34 or fewer points would NOT be recommended for whole grade acceleration.

Importance of Support

The ideal fit for a twice-exceptional student and his or her educational environment is one where both the student's giftedness and disability are evenly accounted for through appropriate education and services.

Special education services are needed even after acceleration occurs.

Key to be strength-focused and strive to find peers who share same abilities and interests. These peers are more likely to be found in programs for gifted and talented students.

Accommodations that focus on intellectual, physical environment, social, and emotional needs through a strength-based lens.

Importance of Support

Interventions? Hard to answer because of complexity of 2e.

Interventions are not universal, and don't apply across disorders

Research tends to group all students with autism in the study. Variability in this population is not addressed. High performing students with autism are different than population with autism.

Resources:

Assistive technology – Apps and Chrome Extensions (Assistive Technology in Special Education: Resources for Education, Intervention, and Rehabilitation; 2nd ed. Prufrock Press)

http://www.2enewsletter.com/article_NoOneSaidItWasEasy.html

Bright Now: Episode 3 Twice-Exceptional (featuring Megan Foley Nicpon) www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZo9A-6pJXw

<https://www.davidsongifted.org/Search-Database/entry/A10845>

<https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/twiceexceptional.pdf>

Belin-Blank Center - “Assessment & Counseling” tab

<https://www2.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank/clinic/pdfs/pip2.pdf> (professionals)

<https://www2.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank/clinic/pdfs/pif.pdf> (families)

A Nation Empowered: Evidence Trumps the Excuses Holding Back America's Brightest Students
Iowa Acceleration Scale, 3rd Edition (available through Great Potential Press - \$269.95)

NAGC – “Resources for Parents” (You will find Twice-Exceptional)

Individualization for Gianna

See Handout

Social & Emotional Concerns

Research refutes concerns/myths of social maladjustment and psychological problems.

Nation Empowered (Volume 2) provides research that supports acceleration as an intervention. Accelerated students advance socially and emotionally.

Academic acceleration produces small-to-moderate social-emotional gains for these students. Evidence of academic gains are much greater. (Dr. Karen Rogers)

Common theme in A Nation Deceived and A Nation Empowered is "Acceleration does not harm students."

What I Hope to Communicate

- Research based
- Appropriate level of consistent challenge seems to make the whole day better
- Communicate across stakeholders
- Concerns (academic, social, and/or emotional) aren't eradicated by remaining at grade level
- Follow your instincts
- Intentional follow-up
- Strength focused
- Strive to "meet" the individual - Be the advocate
- Trust the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS)
- Willingness to deviate to "the path less traveled"

Advocate to foster advocacy for 2e students!

Let's Meet Gianna

The Belin Blank Center found in one study that over 50% of 2e students would benefit from acceleration.

Remember, Gianna is only one of these.

Who is YOUR Gianna?



“To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it.”

-Mother Teresa



Go Hawkeyes!
