

Twice Exceptional Students

A Jeffco/State Definition
and Programming
Considerations



Event Date: March 21, 2007

Presenter: Cheryl Franklin-Rohr, Jeffco Public Schools, Resource Consultant and Twice Exceptional Coordinator

Welcomed audience and thanked them for coming for the re-scheduled session.

Explained that there is a Twice Exceptional binder of information available at every Jeffco School. The binders are being updated this spring, thanks to grant funding.

Colorado/Jeffco Definition

- Students who are identified as gifted and talented in one or more areas of exceptionality

GT

and also identified with:

- A disability defined by Federal/State eligibility criteria
- The disability qualifies the student for an **IEP** or a **504 Plan**



Student has an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) the definition of GT in Jefferson County
AND

Student has been identified with a disability.

How are IEPs and 504s Different?

IEPS

- Federal Law - IDEIA
- Special Educators monitor document
- Instruction by Special Ed teachers



504s

- Office of Civil Rights
- 504 Coordinator monitors document
- Instruction by general education
- A medical need that gets in the way of learning

IEPs and 504s **are** legal documents.

ALPs **are not** legal documents.

Every school has a 504 Coordinator. 504s are based on medical needs only.

The level of need is on a continuum, and a student's needs may vary over time as well.

These documents provide protection under federal guidelines.

IEPs and 504s

- They are both based on a student's instructional needs related to the Twice-Exceptional continuum.
- Transitions are different for each document.
- Each provides protection under Federal guidelines.



Transitions are from teacher to teacher or from school to school.

Twice Exceptional Students Strengths

- superior vocabulary
- highly creative
- resourceful
- curious
- imaginative
- questioning
- problem solving ability
- sophisticated sense of humor
- wide range of interests
- advanced ideas and opinions
- special talent or consuming interest



The key here is to focus on these students strengths. Not all twice exceptional children will display all of these attributes.

Twice exceptional students tend to be very good talkers, they can talk there way into or out of whatever they want.

These kids tend to think outside the box. They are highly creative.

They might the student who takes apart the VCR.

These students have a strong desire to understand WHY things are the way they are. As they get older, they might tend to want to discuss the probability of events happening.

These students tend to know where they want to go.

They are often the kids who ‘get’ the teacher’s pun when it goes over the other kids’ heads.

These students are very high level thinkers.

Often these students have strong talents, that are often OUTSIDE of school. They may not be likely to share this information with others unless you probe them about it.

Understanding their outside interests can help you connect with these kids.

Indicators of Strength

- Creative in approach to tasks
- Are interested in the “Big Picture” rather than small details
- High energy levels



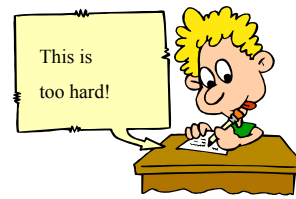
These students often come up with a solution to the problem that others might not think off. They are very creative problem solvers.

They often want to know ‘where are we going’ with this? Why does it matter?

These kids also tend to have very high energy levels.

We want teachers (and parents) to start with their strengths.

Twice Exceptional Students Weaknesses



- easily frustrated
- stubborn
- manipulative
- opinionated
- argumentative
- written expression
- highly sensitive
- inconsistent academic performance
- lack of organization and study skills
- difficulty with social interactions



These kids often melt down when they get home, where it's safe. As a parent, we don't see their frustration building throughout the school day. So many little things may be a struggle that by the time they get home, they fall apart.

These kids can be seen as very stubborn, but it's better to think about it as persistence. They are always ready to renegotiate.

These students can be very manipulative. They will often come up with disruptive behavior to get out of a particular lesson or activity that they know they have problems with. For example, if reading aloud is uncomfortable for him/her, he/she might intentionally get in trouble just ahead of that activity. These kids would rather spend time in the hallway than have their weakness found out. If a student is having disruptive behavior and is thought to be 2X, teachers (or parents) should keep track on WHEN the disruption occurs to determine whether it might be an excuse to get out of an undesirable activity.

These students often need to have the last word on things. They are argumentative.

Written expression: Some students have dysgraphia—they have trouble with the physical act of writing. Other students are thinking so quickly that they can't capture their thoughts quickly enough through writing. For these students you should consider software to capture their ideas.

These students often are very affected by the issues in the world. They take things to heart.

Some students are inconsistent academically, even in the same subject area. What parents or teachers often 'see' is inconsistency that looks like a choice. It is not a student's choice. It's very difficult for them to not have consistent results for their efforts.

These students are often very disorganized. Many of them are also visual spatial. They need a little extra time, sometimes, to find the work that they know they did.

Some twice exceptional students have trouble reading non-verbal cues. Sometimes they don't read expressions and they are misunderstood by peers and teachers.

Indicators of Problems

- May be uncoordinated or have fine motor difficulties
- Auditory and visual processing problems
- Memory concerns or problems in recalling information



Some students seem to appear uncoordinated because of their sensory processing issues.

When the Brain Can't Hear by Teri James Bellis is a very good book that addresses auditory processing problems.

Some students really need mnemonic devices to help them memorize or recall information.

Indicators of Problem

- Difficulty with step by step directions
- Difficulty explaining or expressing ideas
- Blame others for their problems
- Distractible



Twice exceptional students often spend time blaming others for their problems.

Lots of these students get an Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) label, but the distractibility can be caused by other factors.

Indicators of Emotional Concerns

- Anger
- Depression
- Self-criticism
- Crying
- Disruptive behavior
- Clowning
- Denial of problems
- Withdrawal
- Daydreaming and fantasy
- Apathetic behaviors



These students have a lot of self-initiated negative talk. They might react strongly when they get negative feedback from others, because they've already told themselves the same thing.

Often the class clown is 2X student (not all class clowns are, of course).

Sometimes the daydreaming is their self-coping mechanism to re-energize.

Apathetic behavior often happens as they get older. It's easier to say you ' I choose an F' rather than to work very hard and still get an F.

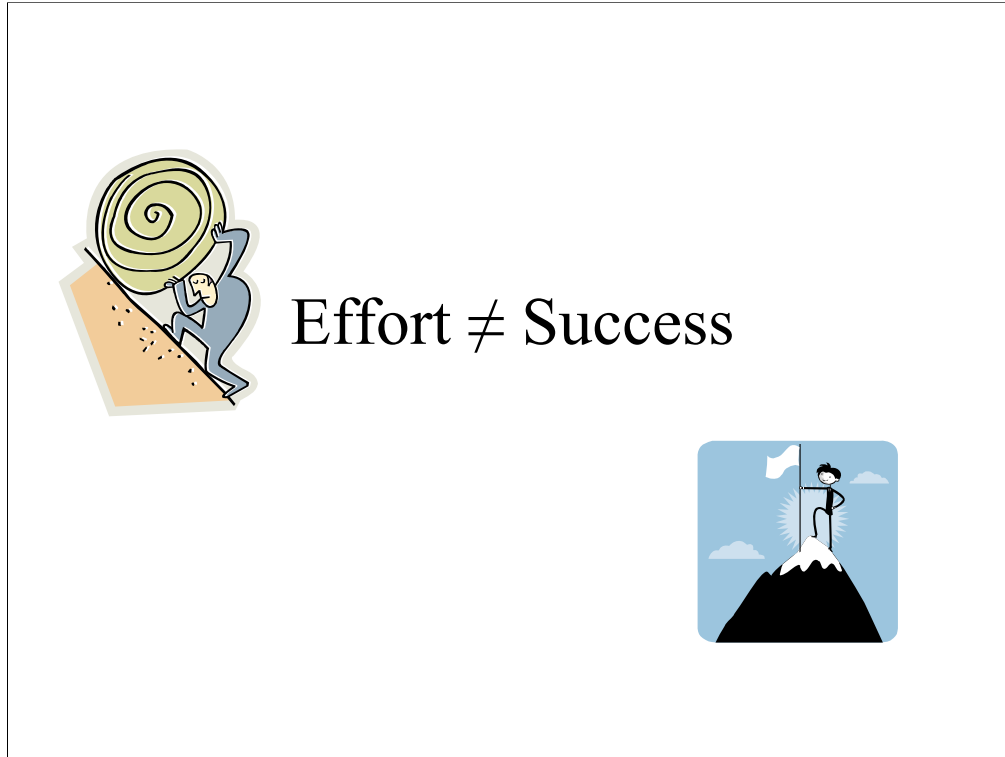
Perceived Failure Results in These Stages of Behavior

- Stage One
 - Confusion, withdrawal, or acting out
- Stage Two
 - Disengagement, procrastination and complain about activity being stupid. “I don’t care attitude”
- Stage Three
 - Denial and negativism. “Students who cooperate are really dumb.”

Often students progress through these stages without intervention. If you see a student in an early stage, you’d want to intervene before they progress to the later stages.

Question: What do you do if you’re child is in Stage 3 and getting A’s?

Cheryl, great segue to the next slide.



This is a really key point. The twice exceptional student often does not see the connection between effort & success! They need to see that if they work, they will be successful. They also need to see that if they NEED to work to be successful. If they can cruise along without working hard and still get A's, at some point, they will run into a wall. It may be 2nd grade, 8th grade, H.S. or college. Then they think that all those years I faked them out. I'm not really gifted.

It is critical that they know that if they keep working they will be successful (that may not be an A, it is do you understand the concepts?). We have to work with these kids to make sure that they learn this connection.

Identification of 2X Students

- Twice-Exceptional students are difficult to identify because their strengths and weaknesses may mask each other creating a unique learner profile, atypical of a gifted student or a student with disabilities.
- The same instructional strategies will help any student exhibiting these learning behaviors.



These children are often difficult to identify because their strengths mask their weaknesses. Sometimes we don't have any idea until 3rd or 4th grade when they can't just site-read any more.

Often we find students in special ed. labs who are brilliant, but the focus has been on their weaknesses.

Identification requires coordination of effort with:

- Special Education/504 Coordinators
- Gifted and Talented Consultants
- G/T Building Liaisons at each school
- Building Level Problem-Solving Teams
- Counselors
- Mental Health Coordinators



We need to coordinate a number of people to identify these students. We provide a lot of training to classroom teachers to help them identify these students.

Cheryl referenced the materials in the Twice Exceptional Binder that is located in every school building in the district. The materials are there to reference for all the classroom teachers and school counselors and psychologists.

The key is to lower the barriers so that these kids can be successful. We want to help them become capable, successful learners.

- The goal of programming for twice exceptional students is to maximize success while minimizing failure and frustration.



“The simplest way to solve behavior problems is to help students become capable successful learners.”



Susan Winebrenner



Teachers need to be very careful about the level of repetition with these kids. Only give them the repetition they need, beyond that repetition can be damaging to their self-esteem and their desire to learn. Once they ‘get it’ they need to move on.

Focusing on weakness rather than strength results in:

- Poor self-esteem
- Lack of motivation
- Depression
- Stress



When teachers continually focus on the disability, rather than the gifts, it tears down the child's self-esteem. It makes the child think that he/she is incapable. This results in a lack of motivation and depression.

In order to maximize a student's potential you need to

Utilize a collaborative approach among the classroom teacher, special education teacher, counselor, mental health provider, 504 Coordinator, gifted education, and parents.



Whenever we're dealing with gifted students (or any student for that matter) we want to maximize potential. This takes a collaborative approach between all the team members.

In summary



Acknowledge and nurture the strengths and passions of twice-exceptional students.

All members of the team and parents need to focus on what the student CAN do. All of these children have strengths. The key is to find them and to highlight the strengths to bring the weaknesses along.

Parenting Twice-Exceptional Students



- Be involved in your child's school program
- Identify attributes of giftedness
- Identify behavior disruptions, learning struggles, or poor academic success in the face of high ability
- Be aware of a mismatch between your child and his or her school placement
- Provide emotional support and professional counseling as needed
- Provide opportunities for involvement in extra-curricular activities

Dr. Jan Blocker, professor School of Education, University of California

It is important for parents to be part of the team. Parents should not assume that the teacher really knows what to do with these students. Many times parents know a lot about how to draw upon the student's strengths. Keep an open dialogue with the teacher(s). And spend more time in the classroom when necessary, but back off when things are going along ok.

Parents need to be careful with their language choice they use with the children. Never say, for example, "You are the best reader." At some point, they will meet someone who is better. Use language like, "You are one of the best readers".

School placement can be an important component. Understand your choices and look for the right fit for your student.

Realize that schools don't have a lot of counselors on staff. If your child need additional support, if you are seeing any of the signs, get them help.

Avoid the tendency to take away the activity that they love most when students aren't getting their work done. Often it is this outside activity that is bolstering self-esteem. Instead set up a system that rewards the student for the work they have done. Remember, the goal is to teach these kids that work results in success. So give them credit for the work they do, encourage additive behavior.

Do nothing to diminish hope



Rick Stiggins

We have an obligation, as parents and as teachers, to do nothing to diminish their hope. So often by the time this kids hit high school, they are not willing to trust teachers (or the system) any more. Often their experiences over the years in school cause them to lose hope, to lack trust. It is our job to keep that from happening.

Talk with kids about what they think is working. For example, ask “how do you think you did on the test?” Then when the test comes back, ask were you correct in how you thought you did? Use Metacognition with them. Talk about how they are thinking about things. Use the strategies that work with them and share those strategies with teachers.