



# Twice Exceptional Children: Learning Disabled and Gifted and Talented

## *Quick Reference Material*

Students who are both gifted and talented (GT) and learning disabled (LD) typically fall into one of three classifications:

1. Students who are identified as GT but not LD
2. Students who are identified as LD but not GT
3. Students who have not been identified as LD or GT.

### **Characteristics**

#### ***Strengths***

Twice exceptional (GT LD) students typically demonstrate superior ability in forming concepts and abstract ideas. They may demonstrate ability in mathematical reasoning, spatial perception, vocabulary, problem solving, and in specific content areas such as geometry, science, arts and music.

#### ***Challenges***

GT LD students have difficulty making sense of isolated details that are not part of the "bigger" picture. Skills such as phonics recognition, memorization, spelling, handwriting, computation and sequential tasks are often challenging. GT LD students have difficulty with visual-motor integration and visual-auditory processing. They are often disorganized, frustrated, misbehave and fail to complete assignments-which is compounded by their perfectionism and unreasonable self expectations.

### **Identification**

The Idaho State Department of Education requires (for the LD identification process) at least a 15 point discrepancy between the regressed full scale ability score (IQ) and the standard achievement score in one or more of the seven areas of LD. (See pg. 41 in the Idaho Special Education Manual.) Another requirement is the documentation of "adverse effect". This can be achieved by documenting observations, work samples and reports from the classroom teacher. The G/T identification process should attempt to identify special talents or gifts often masked by disabilities. Susan Baum (1991) recommends using subtests from the WISC-III to identify gifted LD students instead of the entire score. For example, GT LD students typically score higher on object assembly, picture arrangement, block design, and comprehension, and lower on coding, arithmetic, digit span and vocabulary. Other assessment instruments may include structured interviews, behavioral and observation checklists, tests of creativity and products scoring guides.

## **Interventions**

- Modify curriculum to address the strengths and interests of the GT LD student. The students need meaningful interaction with subject matter.
- Implement problem solving, and creative and critical thinking skills in the curriculum.
- Provide non-verbal activities, e.g., spatial design and dramatic expression.
- Present materials in a variety of ways, e.g., visually, orally and kinesthetically. Convey sophisticated content via speakers, mentorships or demonstrations. Offer different activity options so students can use strengths and preferred learning styles.
- Allow students opportunity to share knowledge in different ways, e.g., taped reports and murals.
- Allow students to investigate real life problems for real audiences in areas of interest.
- Match students with community mentors, especially with accomplished adults who have learning disabilities.
- Provide open-ended challenges that require divergent thinking, especially in small group settings.
- Provide students with the opportunity to learn compensation skills. These may include organization skills, computer literacy, and obtaining information from sources other than reading, e.g., documentaries and visual aids.
- Assist in strengthening students' self-concept. Teachers need to hold high expectations for these students.
- Use contracts and give realistic deadlines.

## **Resources**

Baum, S. (1991). To Be Gifted and Learning Disabled. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press, Inc.

Brody, L. & Mills, C. (1997). Gifted Children With Learning Disabilities: A Review of the Issues. Retrieved April 11, 2001 from the Internet at:  
[http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/gt\\_ld/jld\\_gtld.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/gt_ld/jld_gtld.html)

Conover, L. (1996). Gifted and Learning Disabled? It is Possible! Retrieved April 11, 2001 from the Internet at: [http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/gt\\_ld/conover.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/gt_ld/conover.html)

Maker, J. & Udall, A. Giftedness and Learning Disabilities. Retrieved December 12, 2000 from the Internet at: [http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/gt\\_ld/eric\\_digest427.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/gt_ld/eric_digest427.html)

Willard-Holt, C. (1999). Dual Exceptionalities. Retrieved April 11, 2001 from the World Wide Web: [http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/gt\\_ld/ericE574.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/gt_ld/ericE574.html)