TWICE EXCEPTIONAL: BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING GIFTED STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Abstract - This presentation details the methodology for teachers to identity and support a population of students who have historically been overlooked in regards to their educational needs. The twice exceptional (2e) student is a learner who is considered gifted and also has a leaning disability, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Many of these students remain underserved throughout their educational careers because their exceptionalities may mask each other, resulting in a special population of students who are not achieving to their fullest potential. There are three common scenarios that may make the identification of a 2e student challenging. First, the student may have been identified as gifted, and her disability may go unnoticed. She could also be considered an under-achiever or she may be able to compensate for her disability under the school works becomes more challenging. In the second scenario, the student may be identified as having a learning disability and is only receiving remedial services where his giftedness will not be highlighted. His overall IQ scores may be misleading because they were impacted by his learning disability. In the third scenario, the student is able to compensate for her ability well enough to maintain average scores and she goes undetected as both gifted and learning disabled. Research in the area identifies the complexity involved in identifying 2e students, and how multiple forms of assessment are required. It is important for teachers to be aware of the common characteristics exhibited by many 2e students, so these learners can be identified and appropriately served. Once 2e students have been identified, teachers are then challenged to meet the varying needs of these exceptional learners. Strength-based teaching entails simultaneously providing gifted instruction as well as individualized accommodations for those students. Research in this field has yielded strategies that have proven helpful for teaching 2e students, as well as other students who may be struggling academically. Differentiated instruction, while necessary in all classrooms, is especially important for 2e students, as is encouragement for academic success. Teachers who take the time to really know their students will have a better understanding of each student's strengths and areas for growth, and therefore tailor instruction to extend the intellectual capacities for optimal achievement. Teachers should also understand that some learning activities can prove very frustrating to students, and these activities can be modified based on individual student needs. Because 2e students can often become discouraged by their learning challenges, it is especially important for teachers to assist students in recognizing their own strengths and maintaining motivation for learning. Although research on the needs of 2e students has spanned across two decades, this population remains underserved in many educational institutions. Teacher awareness of the identification of and the support strategies for 2e students is critical for their success.

Keywords - Twice Exceptional, Gifted, Special Needs