Students who become identified as twice exceptional have soared over a huge hurdle simply by being credited with more than one classification. The combination of different exceptionalities can cause this to be an under-recognized subgroup. Since twice-exceptional groups can also fall into other social, cultural, and economic subgroups, the challenges can be exponential. The concept of underserved or inappropriately serviced students poses a concern that needs to be addressed by public school system in a systematic and research-based manner. Those students typically struggle and need extra support to be successful in the classroom and in social situations. Successful programs and strategies used in connection with other underserved subgroups could be implemented as sources of research-based ideas. To help develop a school-wide program, the definition of twice exceptional, as well as the challenges the students face, must be clarified before implementation of instructional practices. Suggested strategies include reviewing the identification process and providing teacher training and support for stakeholders.

Suggestions:

In Clark’s textbook, a Tomlinson (2002) research study suggests that teachers and parents can assist gifted students with uniquely emotional issues by the following:

- Helping students feel like they belong
- Recognizing that mature and immature actions can be expressed at the same time due to higher than normal intellectual level with socially appropriate age level behaviors.
- Providing real and meaningful intellectual and academic challenges
- Guiding them to use their intellect to make decisions and set limits.

Identification starts the referral process. Within the Bianco study, the process was examined especially between regular education and special education teachers. It found that overcoming stereotypes with labels hindered the identification of academic gifted process (Bianco 2005). Especially interesting is that a special education teacher is less likely to refer a student for testing for an academically gifted program; the most common reason being the teacher’s perception of the student’s typical label characteristics (Bianco 2005). The lens of the spe-
Although the first definition of twice exceptional appeared in the Education Amendments of 1969, according to Bianco in “The Effects of Disability Labels on SPED,” no single definition of gifted and talented is generally accepted nor used for identification and eligibility purposes (Bianco 2005). Moreover, experts cannot all agree on a definition of gifted, thus making the identification process difficult. Further disagreement exists in the diagnosis of twice-exceptional (Kalbfleisch 2013). A lack of epidemiological data exists because of the problem of defining gifted (Kalbsleisch 2013). The basic concept of twice-exceptional is a measured high intelligence quotient (IQ) and a processing disorder or disabilities that skew how intelligence is demonstrated.

The concept goes back to the 1970s, the term was used in 1980s (Kalbsleisch 2013). Kalbsleisch cites little evidence of the prevalence because the data collected for different disabilities vary. This phenomenon is hard to track because of different reporting patterns (Bianco 2005). Different disabilities are labeled under different category lists in schools. For example, most students in the Wake County Public School System diagnosed with ADHD are identified under 504 categories while students with learning disabilities are identified under IEP categories. Therefore, these twice identified students, in both AG and either LD or ADHD, can be found on multiple lists. There is not just one list of twice identified students.

“Twice-exceptional students, those who have disabilities and display areas of gifts or talents, frequently spend their high school years with a focus on their disabilities.”
Schultz -P 119

My childhood is filled with the frustrating discrepancy between not understanding how my mind works and my performance in the classroom. Identified in late elementary school as academic gifted with learning disability, my educator parents had their hands full. I was later told by a respected professor that I was “the most frustrating student” because I picked up foreshadowing in Hamlet that a PhD Shakespearian scholar who taught decades had never considered, but I wrote a paper that looked like I had never read the material. The amount of work required to earn decent grades was by intrinsic motivation, but was hampered by certain teachers. Other teachers should be heralded because one can assume that there was no professional development or classes on how to deal with twice-exceptional students. I was told repeatedly that I was the first twice-exceptional labeled student in our high school’s history. While attending a college known for its strong educational teaching program, I never heard the term twice-exceptional nor learned how to deal with these special students.
cial education teacher perhaps focuses on deficit areas instead of potential (Bianco 2005). Further strengthening this position is the idea that referral for poor academic performance and/or behavior problems is more common than instigation for giftedness (Nelson 2005). With minimal training of ten hours, teachers could be made twice as effective in recognizing characteristics of gifted students and making accurate referrals of those unserved subgroups (Bianco 2005).

“Differing beliefs and opinions of teachers, parents and students often lead too few accommodations, to many accommodations, or the wrong accommodations” (Weinfeld 2005, p. 48) so best research-based practices should be offered to educators with systematic training. Students enrolled in challenging higher-level courses in secondary school will need the consistent implementations of appropriate accommodations to adapt to the rigor, pace, and curriculum of the college-level course (Schultz 2012). The need for differentiated services is critical to develop their strength while helping them overcome their learning challenges. Nelson mentions the need for teachers to overcome their own frustration at a student’s inability to demonstrate academic skills because their secondary exceptionality might be hindering the school success (2005). High expectations for gifted students prove to be a successful strategy in multiple studies such as Harmon (2001). Effective teachers who are successful with subgroups of gifted learners need to communicate concepts in a meaningful way and from multiple perspectives, using a multicultural curriculum aligned with critical thinking skill (Harmon 2001).

The suggestion that educators use students’ strengths to overcome or compensate for their challenges can impact multiple aspects of their lives and boost their confidence (Weinfeld 2005). Further evidence revealed that twice-exceptional students tend to have emotional and behavioral problems that need intensive support (Nelson 2005). Positive mentoring relationships with school staff and encouragement from teachers have proven effective in making a twice-exceptional student successful in even AP or similar college classes (Schultz 2012). The twice-exceptional student can prove successful with implementation of solutions for the problems noted.
Here are seven basic principles, taken from Stephen Covey’s Seven Habits of Highly Successful Students:

1) **Be Proactive.**
   a. See challenges coming, and take steps to face them before they overwhelm you.
   b. Keep and maintain a schedule.
   c. Get organized!

2) **Begin with the end in mind.**
   a. Set goals based upon class expectations.
   b. Keep your energy and efforts focused on achieving your goals.

3) **Put first things first.**
   a. Set priorities to help you achieve your goals.
   b. Tie your schedule into your goals.

4) **Think win/win.**
   a. Look for the potential benefits in your work and your relationships in class.
   b. Remember that experience in one area reinforces experience in others.

5) **Seek first to understand, then to be understood.**
   a. Listen to others before you criticize them.
   b. See how others’ ideas reinforce or conflict with your own.
   c. Make your point clearly and concisely so that others can understand you.

6) **Synergize.**
   a. Look at how things fit together.
   b. Put your current experience to work for you in new endeavors.

7) **Sharpen the saw.**
   a. Evaluate your actions.
   b. Look for areas of improvement.
   c. Set goals to achieve improvements, and follow them.

---

**Ashley White is a secondary social studies teacher at the North Carolina high school in which she graduated. She is in her eighteenth year of teaching multiple courses and levels including having taught AP Human Geography, AP European History, world history, and civics. Ashley has been elected to her School Improvement Team for 16 years and served as Chair for three, performing as a liaison between the high school and the county system.

At the county level, Ashley has assisted by developing curriculum guides for world history, AP human geography, and African American studies. She was selected to develop an honors world history portfolio on behalf of the county for submittal to the NC Department of Public Instruction. In addition, she led a professional development seminar on electronic syllabus best practices at a county-wide leadership summit.

Ashley is active in different professional educational associations, and is currently a National Academy Foundation Fellow and was a 2014 Academy Foundation national co-presenter. In the past three years, she has expanded her global understanding by traveling via sponsored educational opportunities to both China and Italy. Ashley consistently pursues diverse learning experiences including post-graduate level courses in a variety of subjects, most recently which have been focused on AIG.

---

**References**


Covey, Stephen R. (2008) *The Leader in Me: How Schools and Parents around the World are Inspiring Greatness, One Child At A Time*. Free Press, Detroit MI.


