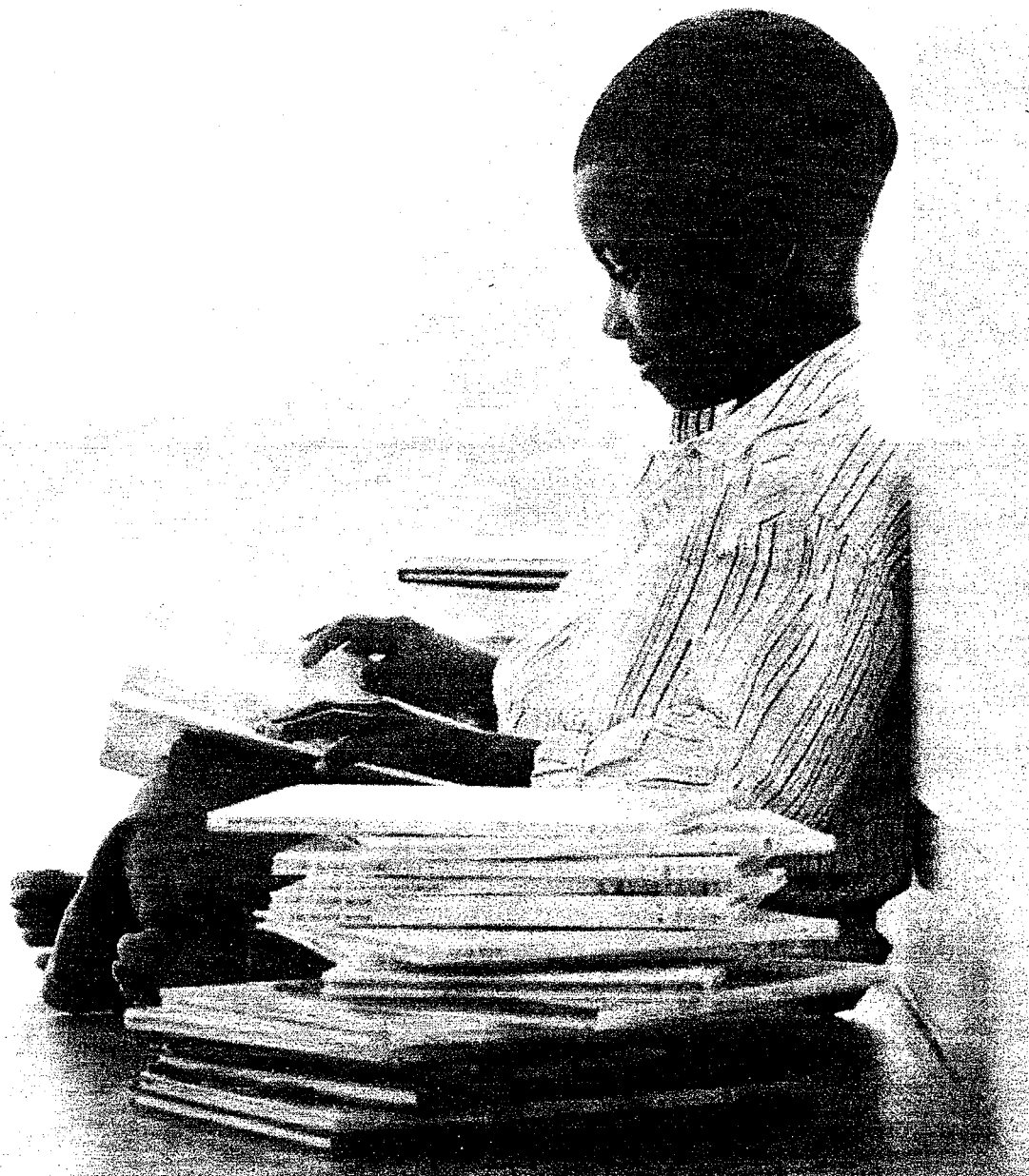


7 Myths About Twice-Exceptional (2E) Students

By Amanda Morin



Some students with learning and attention issues have outstanding skills in certain academic areas. These kids are often called “twice-exceptional” (or 2E) learners. They’re exceptional in two ways. They’re gifted, and they have learning issues.

They also face unique challenges, not the least of which are myths and misconceptions about being 2E. If you have a 2E child, you may hear all kinds of things that give you pause. Here’s the reality behind seven common misconceptions.

Myth #1: Being gifted makes up for having a learning or attention issue.

Twice-exceptional students can be confusing to teachers (and to parents). It can be hard to recognize or understand the signs. Sometimes giftedness may mask learning and attention issues. Other times the extreme strengths and weaknesses “cancel each other out.” In either case, 2E students can look as if they have average abilities.

But when you look more closely at where they shine and where they struggle, it becomes clear that they really are 2E. No matter how well they can use their strengths, they still have learning and attention issues for which they need support.

Myth #2: Students can’t be gifted and lack basic skills, so they’re just not trying hard enough.

It can be hard to realize that a child who understands some things on such a profound level can have trouble with basic skills. But 2E students often have uneven skills. They may do really well in one area, like math, but have trouble with processing speed, social skills or following directions. Without explicit instruction in those areas, it doesn’t matter how hard 2E kids try—they’re still going to have trouble.

Myth #3: 2E students aren’t eligible for IEPs or 504 plans.

When a student is mostly doing well, the school can sometimes be hesitant to evaluate him for special education services. But academics aren’t the only thing to consider. There are other challenges that can point to learning and attention issues, too. These can include things like trouble making friends or managing emotions.

The U.S. Department of Education made it clear that 2E students and behavior supports are covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Schools must evaluate a child if a disability is suspected. If a student is found eligible, he should have an IEP or a 504 plan.

Myth #4: Giftedness and challenges can’t be addressed at the same time.

For 2E students to succeed, both their giftedness *and* their challenges need to be addressed. They need to be challenged in areas in which they're gifted. They also need support in the areas where they struggle, just like any other student with a learning or attention issue.

If you're not sure how your school handles that, ask how it meets the needs of 2E learners.

Myth #5: Addressing weaknesses should be the top priority when helping 2E students.

The National Education Association stresses that programs for 2E learners should be individualized to meet both special education and gifted needs. One isn't more important than the other.

Some school districts even have individualized learning plans to address specialized instruction for gifted students. Others have special programs to address the unique needs of 2E students. No matter how your school handles it, playing to your child's strengths is best practice.

Myth #6: 2E students need accommodations, so they can't be in AP classes.

While data shows that 2E kids are underrepresented in gifted programs, it's not because these students *can't* be there. Accommodations are changes that make it easier for your child to learn. They change *how* he's learning, not *what* he's learning, however. So they have no impact on the content of the AP course.

Myth #7: 2E students should be more mature than other kids their age.

2E kids often have what's known as *asynchronous development*. That means they're far ahead intellectually, but far behind socially and emotionally. This gap can cause kids a lot of anxiety and make it hard for them to get along with other kids their age.

2E kids may get easily frustrated with other students who don't "get it" as quickly as they do. They may also have a lot of anxiety around doing things "just right." They may come across as argumentative when they really just want to have in-depth discussions. And they can have trouble reading social cues the way other kids do.

By building a good relationship with your child's teachers, you can help dispel some of the misconceptions around 2E students. Learn more about the different kinds of learning strengths your child may exhibit. And read about an inspiring film that may help you feel more hopeful about your 2E children.

About the Author



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A parent advocate and former teacher, Amanda Morin is the proud mom of kids with learning and attention issues and the author of *The Everything Parent's Guide to Special Education*.

<https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/empowering-your-child/building-on-strengths/7-myths-about-twice-exceptional-2e-students>