

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL (2e)?

2e students have exceptional talents while also experiencing learning disabilities such as ADHD, autism, and dyslexia. They often have deep passions and strengths and shine in those areas, but are sometimes seen as lazy or obstinate outside of their interests.

## 2e IDENTIFICATION MATTERS!

Even if they perform at grade level, 2e students are overtaxed using their gifts to compensate for their disability, or underperform if their disability masks their gifts.

*2e students develop asynchronously.* For example, a 4th grader may:

- Understand math at a 7th grade level
- Write at a 2nd grade level
- Socialize at a 1st grade level
- Reason at a 12th grade level

Developmental asynchrony often results in anxiety and depression; students may feel deficient despite having incredible intellectual and creative strengths. When combined with sensory overstimulation and impulse control issues, children may experience behavioral challenges in the classroom.

*With proper support,  
2e students can  
reach their potential,  
shine in their classrooms,  
and become amazing future  
contributors to society.*

### WHAT THEY FEEL

**MISUNDERSTOOD**  
TEASED PRESSURED DIFFERENT  
UNDERVALUED LONELY ANXIOUS  
DEPRESSED NOT GOOD ENOUGH  
OVER/UNDER STIMULATED  
PRETENDING TO BE "NORMAL"

### WHAT YOU SEE

Acting impulsively, acting out  
Attempting to escape tasks  
Pacing, fidgeting, doodling  
Looking away, distracted  
Trying to self-regulate  
Wandering by themselves  
Blurting out answers  
Shutting down



## Top tips for working with 2e kids

### LET THEIR STRENGTHS SHINE

Ask children and parents to identify strengths and interests, then build on these to unlock their potential.

### BE CURIOUS AND EMPATHETIC

There is always a logic to frustrating behavior. 2e kids don't intend to give teachers a hard time, rather they are having a hard time.

### ADJUST LEVEL TO ASYNCHRONOUS DEVELOPMENT

Even though 2e children are bright, they cannot master every subject at the same level or pace.

### COLLABORATE WITH THEIR TEAM

Ask parents, previous teachers, and their psychologists, behaviorists, etc. to learn what works.

## Changemakers

Anthony Hopkins  
Distinguished Actor  
**AUTISM**



Octavia Butler  
Prescient Author  
**DYSLEXIA**



Simone Biles  
Olympic Gymnast  
**ADHD**



## 2e CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

We asked parents of 2e children to brainstorm common challenges their children face and suggest solutions they have found that work to address those challenges. Parents know that a teacher’s job is incredibly challenging and that asking an educator to embark on the journey of supporting 2e kids is not a small task - the good news is that these solutions can help ALL kids! And remember - *you are not alone!* Partner with the parents, special ed team, counselors, psychologists, behaviorists, and the student to understand behaviors, implement a plan, and establish routines.

CHALLENGE	SOLUTIONS
<b>Student lacks motivation</b>	Relate strengths and interests to the work; differentiate material
<b>Can't sit still</b>	Address underlying reason - anxiety, sensory, focus; allow movement breaks or other non-distracting ways to address this need, as it helps some to learn
<b>Sensory overload, withdrawal</b>	Offer sensory breaks, headphones for noise cancelling, quiet workspot, take a walk outside, work in resource room; examine environment to identify potential changes
<b>Meltdowns</b>	Pick and choose battles; offer sensory breaks, headphones, quiet workspot; contact district behaviorist
<b>Child won't start / takes too long to complete work</b>	Provide accommodations: keyboarding, dictation, extra time, fewer problems, verbal brainstorm with teacher taking notes, joint storytelling, graphic organizers
<b>Fear of failure</b>	Address any perfectionism - 2e kids can be their own harshest critics
<b>Organization / executive function challenges</b>	Designate a place for each item (e.g., binder, folder, with color code), use a calendar, encourage to-do lists; strategically pair peers for project work
<b>Lack of understanding / acceptance by peers</b>	Modulate teacher reaction to behavior so it doesn't stand out; connect kids with quirky interests; encourage inclusion to minimize bullying
<b>Bored in a subject / subject too easy</b>	Differentiate - set faster pace, avoid rote repetitive work, require fewer problems; provide puzzles, creative projects, complex problems
<b>Finishes work early</b>	Designate a book, journal, doodling, or special project
<b>Difficulty with group work</b>	Pair with supportive peers, assign clear roles, create group work skills checklist (e.g. share one idea, listen to one idea)
<b>Social challenges</b>	Create friendship circles, work with school psychologist and speech language pathologist to offer social skills groups
<b>Low self-esteem</b>	Celebrate their accomplishments, give them chances to shine and lead in their areas of strength
<b>Traditional assessments don't display child's full capabilities</b>	Allow for a variety of ways to show mastery - written, spoken, video, comic book, etc. as long as they show they are mastering the key points