

Extraordinary Strengths + Exceptional Struggles

Is Your Child Twice-Exceptional?

- Do you have a bright child who struggles to show it in an academic setting?
- Does your child love to think about numbers or discuss advanced math concepts but resists doing a simple math assignment?
- Have they memorized elaborate sequences of historical events but can't remember to turn in their homework?
- Does your child conduct deep, well-reasoned debates with you but struggle with reading or writing?

You may have a twice-exceptional (2e) child!

What is 2e?

2e children have both exceptional talents and learning differences including autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, specific learning disorders such as dyslexia and dysgraphia, general anxiety disorder, and others.

Being a 2e learner comes with many strengths!

Extraordinary strengths are a core part of being a 2e learner and leveraging these strengths is essential to their growth and well-being. Depending on their learning difference(s), 2e children may display any of these strengths—or many others!

- Makes connections across disciplines
- Able to see the big picture, including perspectives and patterns
- Presents strong narrative reasoning—recalling stories, episodes and concepts
- May have high potential for entrepreneurship and visionary leadership
- Shows creative, out of the box thinking
- Displays enthusiasm for learning—on their own terms
- Seeks adventure and novelty through their curiosity
- Experiences high motivation, knowledge, skill, and passion in interest areas
- Able to focus intently on details
- Needs less repetition than peers to master content

These unique thinkers can be the changemakers the world needs most. Many eminent people share characteristics of 2e learners, including Steven Spielberg, Greta Thunberg, Simone Biles, Dan Akroyd, Whoopi Goldberg, and Charles Schwab.

How can I tell if my child is 2e?

"Having the kids at home helped a lot of us gain better insight into what our kids' experiences have been like." - Parent of a 2e learner

With distance learning, parents have front row seats to their children's strengths and challenges. Now more than ever, parents may understand how their child experiences learning. Parents likely have more insights into how their children interact with their teachers and classmates.

If your child has high cognitive ability, excels in high interest areas, and/or displays immense creativity, and also experiences some of the challenges listed below, your child might be twice-exceptional. Please note this list isn't exhaustive and no one child will exhibit all of these characteristics; knowing that these characteristics are commonly observed in 2e learners may help parents understand how to better support their children.

Why 2e matters.

Many parents brush off suggestions that their children have exceptional strengths and/or extraordinary struggles. When it comes to their own children, they may think "Oh, he's just disorganized," "She's a little distracted and a bit shy," or "Every child I know is brilliant!" But, 2e learners may feel everything from misunderstood to undervalued, lonely, or depressed. Even if they perform at grade level, 2e students can be overtaxed using their gifts to compensate for their disability, or underperform if their disability masks their abilities. Understanding children's needs and strengths is critical to helping them grow into their full potential.

What Next?

If you suspect your bright child has a learning difference or is 2e...

- Pursue an evaluation from your school district or a local educational consultant or neuropsychologist.
- Learn more about what 2e is all about and join our events at www.reelpaloalto.org and @reel2e on Facebook and Twitter.
- Check out resources at www.twicegifted.org.

With proper support, 2e students can reach their potential, become shining stars in their schools, and amazing future contributors to society.

Clues that Your Child Might Be 2e

These are just some of the clues your bright child might display that could indicate it's worth looking deeper to see if they have a co-present learning difference. Misdiagnosis and underdiagnosis abound. Use this checklist to better understand whether further evaluation or support might be helpful.

Motivation

- Escapes school-related tasks, often by reading a book in an area of interest
- Lacks motivation for material outside of interest areas
- Bored with schoolwork
- Viewed as lazy or obstinate
- Won't attempt assignments in areas they think they won't do well
- Becomes frustrated or unmotivated when projects don't turn out as planned

Physical/Emotional

- Paces, fidgets, and doodles more than expected
- Attempts to self-soothe, but not always in healthy ways (e.g. skin picking)
- Is exhausted by schoolwork, even sometimes by a single one-hour Zoom meeting
- Shows signs of low self esteem, anxiety or depression
- Shuts down or is easily overwhelmed
- Experiences sensory overload and may withdraw/flee or have an outburst or meltdown

Literacy/Writing

- Refuses to read out loud
- Displays low reading comprehension compared with verbal abilities
- Tries to cover up lower reading ability with humor
- Complains about physical pain when using paper/pen/pencil to write
- Struggles to get ideas into written form (handwritten or typing)
- Finds it challenging to line up numbers when working on math problems
- Can talk through math word problems but can't read them or write out answers easily

Attention/Hyperactivity

- Is constantly in motion, has a hyper body
- Blurts out answers instead of waiting to be called on
- Behaves impulsively; may even feel upset about their own impulsivity
- Says thoughts are running in their minds all the time
- Daydreams more than expected
- Finds it difficult to attend to important school work while simultaneously able to hyperfocus on others

Social/Interaction

- Avoids social situations
- Wanders by themselves rather than engaging with others
- Isn't understood by peers
- Finds group work to be difficult
- Acts impulsively

School Performance

- Doesn't display full capabilities with traditional assessments
- Argues ad nauseum about school assignments
- Struggles with rote memorization
- Can't always explain why or how they arrived at an answer, even when asked to "show your work"
- May be seen as the "class clown"

Executive Function/Organization

- Won't start or takes more time than expected to complete work
- Falls behind over and over again with school assignments, even in subjects where they have a relative strength
- Has big ideas but can't implement them
- Starts projects but very often doesn't finish them
- Can't keep up with notes, assignments, folders
- May be called an "absent minded professor"