

PLC/Book Study Guide for *Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today's Classroom*

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This guide is designed as a professional development resource and can be used to facilitate a book study or as a learning experience for a professional learning community (PLC). Facilitator notes are provided for additional support and explanation in planning and facilitating your school or group's sessions. We recommend that the principal and/or facilitator read the entire guide and the book before beginning the study.

For each session, participants will be asked to read chapters of the book. They may also be asked to bring materials or create or implement something *prior* to attending a session. Each chapter description includes guiding questions and suggested tasks that can be used as group activities during the group session.

Please note that each session's preparation work is noted at the beginning of the session notes. Before you dismiss participants for each session, look ahead to the next session and review and clarify what must be done before the next meeting. Reach agreements if suggested tasks are going to be adjusted or modified.

Introduction

Facilitator note: Educators in gifted education programs may be familiar with the concept of twice-exceptional (2e) learners; however, because 2e students need varied supports in all classrooms, encourage general and special education teachers, counselors, and administrators, in addition to gifted education teachers, to participate in this PLC. A broad coalition of knowledgeable educators provides an opportunity for 2e learners to be well supported in varying environments. Additionally, opening up a dialogue among educators allows for new ideas and supports to flow among various educational settings, providing wrap-around assistance for 2e learners.

Depending on the size of your group, it may be beneficial to discuss the questions in small groups before debriefing in the whole group. If your group has members from a variety of roles, groups that are mixed provide an opportunity for educators to “get outside their bubble” to find ways to support 2e learners in all environments.

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the introduction book study session:

- Read the foreword and introduction.
- Consider the current reality of your work with 2e learners, both personally and within your building, program, or district.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 65: A Talk with a 2e Pioneer, featuring Dr. Susan Baum, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2020/8/19/episode-65-a-talk-with-a-2e-pioneer.

Activities and Discussion Questions

Facilitator note: Documenting participants’ responses to the following introductory conversation can be a useful tool to return to at the conclusion of the PLC. Options for documenting include the following:

- One person records responses as they are shared by participants on chart paper or projected computer screen.
- Small groups discuss the questions and document their responses on chart paper, followed by sharing to the larger group.

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- *Each question is listed separately on chart paper at stations throughout the room; small groups rotate among stations and add their thoughts to the chart paper, followed by whole group discussion.*

Keep this documentation until the end of the book study to review and amend during the final session.

Activity: Current Reality Assessment

1. What is your current reality working with 2e students?
 - a. Strengths:** What strengths do I have as an individual? What are the strengths of my building, program, or district? What successes have I or we experienced?
 - b. Struggles:** What struggles do I face? What are the weaknesses faced by my building, program, or district? Where do I feel uncertain about supports for 2e students?
 - c. Opportunities:** What opportunities and resources for future growth are available to the building, district, or program? What other opportunities or possibilities could help us support our 2e learners?
 - d. Obstacles:** What threats face the building, program, or district related to services for high-ability students? What is holding us back from being able to support our 2e learners effectively?
2. In reviewing the descriptions of each chapter, which do you feel will be the most beneficial to you personally?
3. While part 1 of the book is best read and processed in consecutive order, there may be chapters in part 2 that feel especially relevant and current. Does the group wish to read through and discuss the book in consecutive order or are there specific chapters within part 2 that might be moved to the beginning of the book study in order to immediately provide support for specific students?

Chapter 1

Understanding Twice-Exceptional Learners

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 1 book study session:

- Read chapter 1.
- Consider how the program options at your school align with the needs of the students they serve. Some areas to consider might include identification procedures, style of programs, or collaboration among varied settings.
- Make a list of the accommodations you are providing students on a regular basis, regardless of whether they are documented through an IEP or Section 504 plan. Sort them into the five categories listed in figure 1-5.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 63: Twice Exceptionality + Cultural Diversity = 3e with Dr. Joy Lawson Davis at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2020/7/22/episode-63-twice-exceptionality-cultural-diversity-3e.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. Do the identified 2e learners you work with receive additional services for their giftedness or exceptionality? Were they first identified for gifted services or for special education services and/or an accommodation plan?
2. What procedures or assistance does your school have in place to identify and support gifted students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), English language learners (ELL), or economically disadvantaged? Are the 3e learners in your school supported through this process too?
3. Who participates on the assessment teams for IEPs and Section 504 plans in your building? Are 2e students' advanced cognitive abilities taken into consideration when making eligibility determinations, goals, or accommodations? In what ways could this process better serve the 2e students in your building?

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4. Accommodations can be made by shifts in how students receive the information that is taught or how they are supported. Which of the five areas listed in figure 1-5 are the easiest or most natural to accommodate? Which are more difficult? Share with the group some of the accommodations you've found most successful.

 5. Virtual learning through the COVID-19 pandemic required a variety of creative solutions for accommodations. How did your experiences through the pandemic influence how you view and implement supports for 2e learners?

Chapter 2

Designing Strength-Based Instruction for Twice-Exceptional Learners

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 2 book study session:

- Read chapter 2.
- Choose an upcoming lesson or topic that you will be teaching to one or more 2e learners. Bring the lesson objective or essential question and the planned format of the lesson. If there are other teachers participating in the book study who teach the same content, collaborate with them to choose the same lesson.
- Identify one or two 2e students you are working with. Make a list of their strengths. Use the descriptions of common strengths of 2e learners on pages 37–47 as a starting point, but don't limit yourself to those characteristics.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 32: Being a SPED Advocate for Twice-Exceptional Kids, featuring Amanda Morin, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2019/5/15/episode-32-being-a-sped-advocate-for-twice-exceptional-kids.

Facilitator note: Prepare a copy of the *Strength-Based Lesson Planning Template* on page 52 for each of the book study participants.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. Figure 2-1 on pages 34–36 describes the various types of enrichment and placement options for bright learners. Discuss which of these options has been most effective for the 2e learners you support. Are there any options that your program/building does not offer that you think would better serve 2e learners?
2. Remedial and Supportive Service Options for 2e Learners are listed on pages 47–49. Discuss the pros and cons of each of these options as they apply to the 2e learners you teach. Consider accessibility for services based on identification and logistical factors and how they affect the student's ability to participate in other advanced learning opportunities.

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3. Use the student you identified prior to the book study session as a case study in small groups of two to four. Take turns sharing about the student and lesson with your group. Collaborate to create a plan to provide this student with upward differentiation along with accommodations and modifications for support. Complete the Strength-Based Lesson Planning Template based on this collaboration.

Chapter 3

Social and Emotional Needs of Twice-Exceptional Learners

Preparation

To be completed before chapter 3 book study session:

- Read chapter 3.
- Implement the Strength-Based Lesson Plan created in the previous session.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 24: True Grit – Fostering Tenacity and Resilience, featuring Dr. Emily Mofield and Dr. Megan Parker Peters, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2019/1/23/episode-24-teaching-tenacity-resilience-and-a-drive-for-excellence.

Facilitator note: Depending on the schedule for your book study, some members may not have had a chance to implement their Strength-Based Lesson Plan. If enough members have had time to use their plan, begin the session with a short debriefing of how the process went.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. Strength-Based Lesson Plan Debriefing
 - a. What worked well with using the Strength-Based Lesson Plan? What was difficult?
 - b. If you were to use the plan for the same lesson and student, is there anything you would change?
 - c. The Strength-Based Lesson Plan is a framework for supporting 2e children. Recognizing that it is unrealistic to complete individual lesson plans for each 2e student, how could this template be implemented more efficiently, based on your classroom structure and students?
2. What observations have you made on students' self-beliefs about being 2e? In what ways have you seen twice exceptionality impact their academic, social, and emotional self-concept?
3. Perfectionism, vulnerability, and shame are intricately tied together. How do you see each of these interacting with your 2e students?

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4. When have you struggled to determine the balance between accommodating and enabling? How did you reconcile that balance?
 5. Why is the skill of asking for help so important for gifted and 2e learners? What obstacles prevent some gifted or 2e learners from asking for help? How can we help them overcome those obstacles?

Chapter 4

Motivating Twice-Exceptional Learners

Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 4 book study session:

- Read chapter 4.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 9: The Over-Under on Achievement, featuring Dr. Jim Delisle, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2018/5/16/the-over-under-on-achievement.

Facilitator note: Prepare a copy of the *Types of Motivation* activity on page 92 for each participant. Additionally, search online for Scott Barry Kaufman’s redesigned framework for Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Needs*. Have this available to show to the group during the discussion.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. What are your personal beliefs about motivation? How does this influence your work with students?
2. Self-determination theory of motivation looks deeply at intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. How can breaking motivation down into segments and providing psychoeducation on this concept help 2e learners?
3. Complete the *Types of Motivation* activity on page 92. Share (either in small groups or as a whole group) some of the examples from your own life of the levels of motivation you experience for different activities.
4. Mindset work (growth and fixed mindsets) has been described by some neurodiversity advocates as unhelpful because mindset work emphasizes that students are in control of their effort and motivation, even though their disability may be the main contributing factor. For example, a gifted autistic student may struggle with processing speed and be unable to master timed math tests. A growth mindset might encourage the student to believe that they “aren’t able to pass the timed tests yet,” when in reality, it’s unlikely that their processing speed (based on

their neurological wiring) is something they have a lot of control over. Or, a dyslexic student might struggle with reading and spelling, but be encouraged to use growth mindset to stay motivated and keep trying, perhaps undermining the availability of accommodations. How do you see mindset work impacting 2e students? Are there certain considerations that may benefit 2e students when discussing growth or fixed mindset?

5. Scott Barry Kaufman reimagined Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for his 2020 book *Transcend: The New Science of Self-Actualization*. He explicitly moves away from the idea that Maslow's hierarchy was meant to be interpreted as steps to be mastered in consecutive order. His sailboat image represents our basic needs, which allow us to fulfill the needs represented by the sail. The sailboat itself represents the *process* of reaching self-actualization, which is ongoing. Compare the chart of Maslow's hierarchy on page 86 to Kaufman's version. How do they compare related to the concept of motivation?

Facilitator note: *Further open discussion on the comparison of the two concepts of developmental needs is welcome if time allows.*

Chapters 5 and 6

Goal-Setting for Twice-Exceptional Learners and Executive Functioning

Participant Preparation

To be completed before chapters 5 and 6 book study session:

- Read chapters 5 and 6.
- Using the My Microgoal reproducible on page 111, walk a student through the process of setting a microgoal specific to an executive functioning skill. Develop a strategy with the student to track the executive functioning skill to measure progress on their microgoal. Bring the completed My Microgoal form and a copy of the student's goal tracking chart to the book study session for discussion.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. Actively involving all students in establishing and working toward goals is an effective strategy to increase engagement. What is the value of engaging in this process with neurodivergent students based on their specific needs?
2. The metacognitive cycle breaks down the process for working toward microgoals into an explicit, step-by-step process. In addition to helping students work toward the specific goals they set, an underlying benefit to using the framework of the metacognitive cycle is that it allows students to learn the steps necessary to create change in their lives. How does this process fit into the framework of strength-based strategies for 2e learners?
3. Share (either in small groups or as a whole group) the executive functioning microgoal and goal tracking chart you worked to create with your student. Discuss what went well with the process and what obstacles you faced. Brainstorm with the group ideas to overcome any obstacles and consider next steps for this student or another student who may benefit from the process.
4. Using the list of possible accommodations on pages 120–121, discuss which accommodations might be most easily implemented in your classroom. Brainstorm ideas for additional accommodations for executive functioning strategies that may be suitable for your specific classroom.

Part 2

Facilitator note: Each chapter in part 2 includes a case study. The questions for each case study are the same. Photocopies of the case studies may be useful, as book study participants may benefit from making notes or highlighting certain portions of the information for reflection when answering the questions.

Case Study Questions

1. What would the next steps be in finding supports for the student? What options are available related to services or supports?
2. What strengths does this student have that can be leveraged for success? What opportunities for upward differentiation might be available?
3. What accommodations could support this student in your classroom? (Use the Accommodations Needs Screener on page 33 as a starting point, if needed.)
4. Are there any executive functioning skills that this student needs supported?
5. What are some microgoals that this student could set? Consider academic, social, or emotional self-concepts.

Chapter 7

Academic Diagnoses: Specific Learning Disabilities

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 7 book study session:

- Read chapter 7.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 59: The Stealth Nature of Dyslexia, featuring Dr. Dan Peters, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2020/5/13/episode-59-the-stealth-nature-of-dyslexia.

Facilitator note: *Begin the session with the following dyslexia simulation activity. Each participant will need a piece of paper and writing utensil, and you will need a timer. Prepare participant copies of Case Study 1: Amiya.*

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. Dyslexia simulation activity: Although dyslexia is specifically related to reading fluency, it is a phonological problem, which can then directly impact one's ability to write too. For this activity, you have five minutes to write a journal entry about your day; however, you must follow these rules.
 - You may not use the letters A, Y, or R.
 - Replace every B with a P.
 - Every N makes the /m/ sound and every M makes the /n/ sound.

Reflection questions: What did you notice about your process as you wrote your journal entry? What did you try to do to compensate? What emotions did you experience?

2. How does your identification process and program impact 2e children with specific learning disabilities? For example, does your program require achievement scores to qualify for services? If a gifted child is identified at a young age and then begins to have difficulty with academic skills later on, how are they supported and accommodated?

3. Dysgraphia, or a specific learning disability in written expression, can have multiple causes. It can be a manifestation of dyslexia because of the difficulty with sound–symbol connection. It can also be related to poor fine-motor skills. Or, difficulty with sequencing thoughts and working memory can impact a student’s ability to get their thoughts from their mind to the paper. How might you accommodate each of these areas? Are there other factors that might influence a child’s ability to put their thoughts into written form?
4. Are children with above average or gifted cognitive abilities able to access special education services at your school? What identification process does your district use? Does it use only normative scores or is it able to use intraindividual scores to access services? Are there any steps you could take on a larger scale to help advocate for 2e learners to access these special education services?
5. What types of assistive technology are available to your students? Share with the group the tools that you find the most useful for kids who need accommodations or supports through technology. Are there certain types of technology that would be useful for your 2e students that your school or district does not have access to?
6. What other ways could your school better support gifted students with SLD? What tools or supports do you need from the district to do so?
7. Complete Case Study 1: Amiya with a small group, then discuss your responses with the whole group.

Case Study 1: *Amiya*

Amiya's dad tells everyone about how Amiya has been telling stories since the moment she could talk. From an early age, she would instruct anyone who was nearby to write down the stories she would narrate, each one creative, descriptive, and unique. Amiya would then spend time "publishing" these stories, illustrating them with such intense focus and dedication that her parents began referring to her as Amiya Hemingway.

The gifted program at Amiya's school began identifying students at the end of kindergarten and Amiya started receiving gifted education services as a first grader. In the classroom in first grade, her teacher began to notice that Amiya had an excellent understanding of what was happening in the stories that were read to her, but she struggled with spelling words when she was writing and would often guess words when reading, instead of sounding them out. As the expectations for reading and writing progressively increased, Amiya slowly began to show signs of avoidance of activities that involved reading or writing.

By fourth grade, Amiya's grades were beginning to suffer. She could no longer read enough of the words to infer what was happening, so her scores for reading comprehension began to fall. When reading aloud, Amiya processed slowly and made many errors. When she was able to read silently to herself and answer questions aloud, she performed at a much higher level. Additionally, she was barely able to pass her spelling tests; when she did pass, it was due to extensive studying and memorization of the words of the week, not because she was learning or understanding the spelling patterns that were being taught.

Amiya's confidence began to fall. Her parents reported at parent-teacher conferences that Amiya was asking why she was in the gifted program if she was "so dumb."

Chapter 8

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 8 book study session:

- Read chapter 8.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 35: ADHD by Any Other Name?, featuring Dr. Matthew Fugate, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2019/6/26/episode-35-adhd-by-any-other-name.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 83: REJECTED! Now What? Overcoming Rejection Sensitivity, featuring Brendan Mahan, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2021/4/22/episode-83-rejected-now-what-overcoming-rejection-sensitivity.

Facilitator note: Prepare participant copies of *Case Study 2: Manuel*.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. How does your school's identification process for gifted education or special education services impact the ability for gifted students with ADHD to qualify? Are there certain barriers that can be removed?
2. What are the biggest difficulties faced by your gifted students with ADHD? Are there certain accommodations that have been effective in supporting them?
3. Have you seen characteristics of rejection sensitivity in your gifted students with ADHD? How does this manifest? Are there strategies you've found successful in supporting them?
4. How would you support a gifted student with ADHD who is having difficulty keeping up with academics? What questions would you ask them to understand their emotions and how they perceive their performance?
5. Complete *Case Study 2: Manuel* with a small group, then discuss your responses with the whole group.

Case Study 2: *Manuel*

Manuel was identified for his school's gifted education program as a third grader when the district completed the universal screening in his grade level. At the time, his teacher admitted that she was surprised that he qualified, because although he was a sweet and funny kid, his grades were inconsistent. His work was frequently sloppy, and he often had to be reminded to turn in work that was late.

In fifth grade, Manuel was diagnosed by his primary care doctor with an attention deficit and his mother asked for a Section 504 plan. The school agreed and put some basic accommodations into place, including extended time for tests, no penalty for late work, and permission to turn in homework via email (instead of needing to remember to return the physical paper to school).

Now in seventh grade, Manuel is doing well in his areas of strength. He is interested in history and excels in his social studies class. He is fascinated with literature and reads and interprets it well above his peers. He has a difficult time completing and turning in longer-term assignments and projects. Additionally, his grades in math are suffering because he frequently appears to miss portions of the instruction and gets confused about the sequence of steps to solve certain types of problems. He may do well in one unit and poorly in the next, depending on the concept and how well he does during the first few lessons. If he struggles at the beginning of the unit, it is difficult for him to catch up because he often doesn't realize that he is misunderstanding the assignments—and if he does, he is ashamed to ask for help because he doesn't want his peers to think he doesn't understand.

When asked, Manuel seems to have insight into what is affecting his success: "I just kind of get distracted by whatever I'm thinking about. Even though I try to remind myself to focus, sometimes I don't notice for a long time that my mind is somewhere else." He doesn't have any good ideas about what might help him manage longer-term assignments and states that he "forgets they are due."

Chapter 9

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 9 book study session:

- Read chapter 9.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 84: “Pathological” Demand Avoidance? Words Matter, featuring Kristy Forbes, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2021/5/18/episode-85-pathological-demand-avoidance-words-matter.

Facilitator note: Prepare participant copies of Case Study 3: Violet.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. How does your school’s identification process for gifted education or special education services impact the ability for gifted autistic students to qualify? Are there certain barriers that can be removed?
2. How have you been able to support the gifted autistic students that you work with? Are there certain accommodations that have been successful?
3. Have you worked with students who exhibit characteristics of pathological demand avoidance? Are there strategies that you’ve found successful for supporting these students?
4. How does autism impact the academics of the gifted autistic students you support? Are there strategies that you’ve found are successful in accommodating their needs?
5. One of the main areas that autistic students struggle with is related to communication with peers or teachers. How can you work to maximize a student’s cognitive abilities to support communication struggles?
6. Complete Case Study 3: Violet with a small group, then discuss your responses with the whole group.

Case Study #3: Violet

Violet intends to be an author when she is an adult. Currently in fifth grade, she has already written two novella-length books about her original characters. She loves to tell anyone who will listen all about the characters and their backstories. Violet is friendly, but her parents note that Violet is no longer invited to her classmates' birthday parties and that Violet reports not having any friends. Her teacher notes that there are a few students who are kind to Violet, but overall, Violet struggles to make and keep friends.

Sensory concerns prompted Violet's parents to seek occupational therapy services, which ultimately led them through a psychological evaluation and diagnosis of autism. Violet is easily overwhelmed by loud noises or crowded places, has a very limited diet due to texture and flavor aversions, and resists certain types of fabrics or clothing. She tends to rock her body in her chair while she is working or pace in the back of the classroom when the teacher is providing whole-group instruction. She states that pacing "helps her think."

Emotionally, Violet has an extremely low frustration tolerance. If she does poorly on an assignment, doesn't understand a task, or makes a mistake, she often shuts down and puts her head on her desk, unable to communicate while dysregulated. When extremely overwhelmed, she will begin to cry, and because she is then embarrassed by crying, she will attempt to hide in the back library of the classroom or near the backpacks. Additionally, if Violet is involved in a task and is asked to transition before she has completed what she is doing, or if there is an unexpected change in the routine or schedule, she may become dysregulated.

Although Violet has strong academic skills, she struggles to complete work in a timely manner, due to a combination of perfectionism and slow processing speed. Any type of ambiguous task that does not have a specific right or wrong answer can cause her to freeze. Additionally, group work is difficult for Violet because she struggles to compromise and then has trouble regulating her emotions when her groupmates don't go along with her ideas.

Chapter 10

Processing Difficulties

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 10 book study session:

- Read chapter 10.

Facilitator note: Prepare participant copies of Case Study 4: Braylon.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. How might the various types of processing difficulties (auditory, visual, and sensory) affect a student's ability to access gifted education services in your building, based on the identification process used? Are there alternative identification methods that may be more appropriate for students with processing difficulties?
2. Processing difficulties, whether visual, auditory, or sensory, can mimic other types of neurodivergence, can be a result of those types of neurodivergence, or can make the process of receiving a diagnosis of neurodivergence more difficult. What types of accommodations can be made for students with processing difficulties with or without another diagnosis? How are those accommodations made available across settings in your school?
3. Students with sensory needs might be hypo- or hyper-sensitive to sensory stimuli. What environmental changes can help students with a wide range of sensory sensitivities feel comfortable?
4. Complete Case Study 4: Braylon with a small group, then discuss your responses with the whole group.

Case Study 4: *Braylon*

Braylon is what one could consider a well-rounded student. He is bright (and has been in the gifted program at his school for several years), athletic (he plays competitive baseball and basketball), and well-liked with lots of friends. He is easygoing and often is happy to go along with others' ideas during group work or free time.

Braylon's fourth grade teacher begins to notice some characteristics that stand out to her as mildly concerning. Braylon's performance in class is generally very good, but there are times when he turns in an assignment in which something has interfered with his work—either he hadn't been paying attention during the instructions or he was rushing to get things turned in, because there are many mistakes. When she asks Braylon to correct his work, he is always willing to do so and is usually able to make the corrections easily. Sometimes when she calls on Braylon in class, he appears not to be paying attention. He looks at her blankly for a moment or two and finally, red-faced, asks her to repeat the question, or he says he doesn't know the answer.

During parent-teacher conferences, Braylon's teacher mentions to his mother her concerns and asks if they are noticing anything at home that shows Braylon is having trouble paying attention or following instructions. His mother mentions that he often has trouble following through when he is asked to complete two or three tasks in a row. However, his teacher and mother agree that it doesn't appear to be an attention-related issue, because his performance is okay in some places. For example, when he attends his small-group enrichment classes, he appears to perform well. They decide to talk to Braylon and see if something is impacting his motivation.

During the conversation with his mother and teacher, Braylon gets teary when they ask if he is feeling unmotivated. "No," he tells them, "I just get really confused about things when there is too much noise around." He tells them he is embarrassed to ask for help. When they ask about group work, he notes that it is okay, but usually he just has to let the others take the lead because when they are having group discussions, by the time he has heard and understood what they are saying and thought of his response, the conversation has moved on.

Braylon's mom brings him to the doctor, and he is diagnosed with central auditory processing disorder. Braylon had been masking and compensating for his auditory processing concerns for many years.

Chapter 11

Anxiety and Related Disorders

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 11 book study session:

- Read chapter 11.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 88: What to Do When Kids Worry, featuring Dr. Eli Lebowitz, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2021/7/1/episode-88-what-to-do-when-kids-worry.

Facilitator note: Prepare participant copies of *Case Study 5: Tatiana*.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. How can an understanding of strategies to support anxiety be implemented in situations with 2e learners? What potential situations might cause increased stress or anxiety in 2 learners?
2. Avoidance is a major factor for students who experience anxiety because avoidance is ultimately a strategy for reducing anxiety. How have you noticed students use avoidance as a way to escape uncomfortable situations and emotions in your setting?
3. Students with social anxiety can struggle in many ways in the classroom setting, from self-advocacy to working in groups. What accommodations may be helpful to reduce social anxiety for the 2e students in your classroom?
4. Helping students recognize signs of anxiety by tuning into their psychosomatic signs of distress can be useful; however, some students with sensory differences (for example, hyporeactive interoceptive awareness) may have difficulty noticing those sensations and labeling them. How can you support these students to develop an awareness of when anxiety is building in them?
5. Complete *Case Study 5: Tatiana* with a small group, then discuss your responses with the whole group.

Case Study 5: *Tatiana*

Tatiana is an extremely hard worker. She is a competitive dancer and has a small group of close friends whom she trusts. She was identified for her school's gifted program in second grade and has continued as a conscientious student throughout the years. Her gifted education teacher notes how impressed she is by Tatiana's creative problem-solving skills and the attention to detail that she gives to each project or assignment.

When Tatiana was in fourth grade, her parents noticed a change in her mood. Tatiana had always been a cheerful and chatty child, but suddenly she was on edge and grumpy. At bedtime, she had difficulty falling asleep and would have a list of worries that she needed to disclose to her parents before she could let them leave the room. Her worries ranged from fears about whether her friends were mad at her, what would happen if she missed the bus in the morning, and what would happen if her parents were in a car accident. Her parents talked to her primary care doctor, who diagnosed Tatiana with generalized anxiety disorder. She began working with a counselor to learn strategies to manage her anxiety.

While her anxiety has improved, it is episodic and escalates occasionally. During these escalations, Tatiana becomes anxious at school, sometimes leading to panic attacks or other emotional dysregulation. Now a middle school student, Tatiana's anxiety about social situations and grades has grown and she has begun missing school intermittently. When she does attend school, she struggles with work completion because she is afraid that she's missed too much work and will mess up if she tries it without the teacher's direct help every step of the way. When this is combined with her reluctance to ask for help, her anxiety builds and often prevents her from attempting the work. At home, she struggles with time management and spends significant amounts of time on assignments that should require only a small amount of effort.

Tatiana has told the school counselor that the only class she likes is her gifted education class because she knows the students in there really well. Her grades have begun to fall. Additionally, some of her content area teachers are recommending that she drop her higher-level courses based on her poor attendance, citing the increased rigor and workload as the courses progress. Tatiana does not want to drop her classes, because she is worried about being in classes where she doesn't know anybody; additionally, her parents and gifted education teacher know that Tatiana needs the cognitive challenge of these higher-level courses.

Chapter 12

Depression and Other Mood Disorders

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 12 book study session:

- Read chapter 12.
- Optional: Listen to *The Neurodiversity Podcast* Episode 39: Part One—Suicide Among the Gifted and Twice-Exceptional, featuring Dr. Tracy Cross, at neurodiversitypodcast.com/home/2019/8/21/episode-39-part-one-suicide-among-the-gifted-and-twice-exceptional.

Facilitator note: Prepare participant copies of *Case Study 6: D’Andre*.

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. How might depression or other mood disorders affect a student’s ability to access identification and services related to advanced learning opportunities? Are there any modifications that might increase accessibility?
2. What is your school’s policy on talking to students about self-injury or suicidal thoughts? What are the expected boundaries and procedures if a student discloses thoughts like these to a staff member?
3. Existential questioning or existential concerns are not necessarily the same as clinical depression. Have you had students discuss these topics with you? How would you differentiate between questioning and concerns versus an area that warrants further support or investigation?
4. Students with more significant behavioral or mood disorders, such as disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, may benefit from support through special education. How does your school bridge the diverse needs of these students among the various environments where they receive services?
5. Complete *Case Study 6: D’Andre* with a small group, then discuss your responses with the whole group.

Case Study 6: *D'Andre*

D'Andre's passion is music. A freshman in high school, he participates in the school marching band and was the only freshman selected as a member of the honors jazz band. He excels in math and science and, although he loves music, plans on pursuing a career in engineering.

Around February, D'Andre's teachers noticed a significant change in his academic performance. Work was missing, which was out of character for him. Instead of chatting with his friends before classes began, he chose to sit at his desk on his own and read a book. When D'Andre went to the school counselor to drop his pre-AP science course, his counselor contacted his parents to check in. They had also noticed a change in his mood and behavior and were surprised that D'Andre wanted to drop one of the challenging courses (and also that he hadn't consulted with them first).

The school counselor spoke to D'Andre and asked about his mood. D'Andre confessed that he had been feeling really low lately. "Everything is so difficult, and I just don't think any of it matters," he told her. When asked, he shared that he had been thinking a lot about death and dying, although he wasn't sure why. He reported that he didn't really want to die, but said he sometimes "wishes I could just go to sleep and never wake up." When the counselor asked D'Andre about his classes and coursework, he looked at her and shrugged. "I just don't even know where to start with any of it. It just seems like there is too much to do and I'll never get it finished."

Chapter 13

The Neurodiverse Classroom

Participant Preparation

To be completed before the chapter 13 book study session:

- Read chapter 13.

***Facilitator note:** Have the information from the Current Reality Assessment in the introduction book study session available to discuss and amend.*

Activities and Discussion Questions

1. What steps can you take in your building to normalize neurodiversity?
2. Self-advocacy is an important skill for neurodivergent students. How do you encourage self-advocacy in your classroom or building, specifically for students who are neurodivergent and who struggle with developing self-advocacy skills?
3. Review the discussion responses from the introduction session's Current Reality Assessment. What would you change or add to each of the sections?
4. What are the next steps you will personally be taking to support the 2e students in your classroom or building? What are the next steps you would prioritize for your building or district to take on a systemic basis to support 2e children?

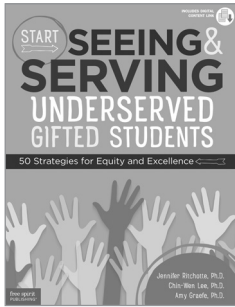
About the Author



Emily Kircher-Morris, M.A., M.Ed., LPC, inspired by her own experiences as a twice-exceptional (2e) learner, is dedicated to supporting 2e children—including her own—in a way she wasn't during her academic years. She has taught in gifted classrooms, has been a school counselor, and is now in private practice as a licensed professional counselor, where she specializes in helping gifted and twice-exceptional kids.

Emily is the president and founder of the Gifted Support Network and speaks at statewide and national conferences. She also hosts *The Neurodiversity Podcast*, which explores parenting, counseling techniques, and best practices for enriching the lives of high-ability people. Emily lives near St. Louis, Missouri.

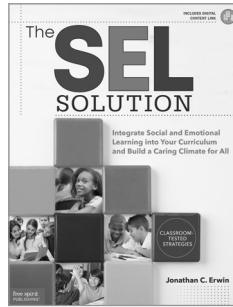
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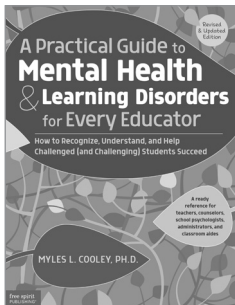
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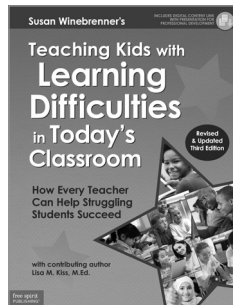
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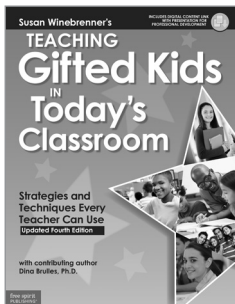
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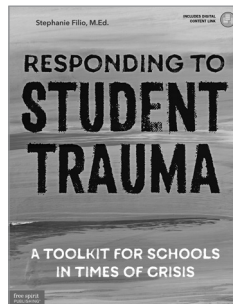
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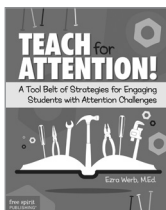
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