



Supporting the Identification and Achievement of the Twice-Exceptional Student

Frequently Asked Questions

Virginia Department of Education

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Introduction

Twice-exceptional learners, students who are both gifted and have a disability, have been described as a group of underserved and under stimulated youth. This occurs because it is difficult for educational professionals to reconcile the twice-exceptional learner's extreme strengths with their noticeable weaknesses. More often than not, one exceptionality overshadows the other. As a result of this inability to look beyond the giftedness or the disability to see the whole child, the needs of twice-exceptional students might be overlooked. Both the gifted aptitudes and disability areas should be addressed by instructional personnel in the school division (Cline, 1999). The challenge for the school division is how to find these students and how to address their educational needs.

This document was designed to provide insight and guidance on issues associated with the identification and instruction of twice-exceptional learners. This document, *Supporting the Identification and Achievement of the Twice-Exceptional Student*, developed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), provides parents, educators, and students with answers to some questions concerning the identification process and instruction of students with dual exceptionalities. Through a question and answer format, the document provides an overview of twice-exceptional learners, describes some learning and behavioral characteristics, suggests evaluation methods/procedures, and discusses placement and service options. Also, resource connections to professional documents and Web sites are provided.

Both the Virginia Department of Education's *Regulations Governing Education Services for Gifted Students* (8VAC20-40-10 et. seq.) and the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* (8VAC20-81), in conjunction with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA) federal implementing regulations, were used as sources in developing the publication. While not legally binding, the responses generally are informal best practices or guidance representing the interpretation of the Virginia Department of Education of the applicable statutory and/or regulatory requirements in the context of the specific question presented. The FAQs in this document are not intended to replace a careful study of the IDEA, its implementing regulations, or Virginia's special education and gifted education regulations. This document should be used in concert with the previously mentioned documents.

The Virginia Department of Education recognizes that it is difficult to answer all the questions that may arise regarding identification and placement of twice-exceptional learners.

Additional information is available on the VDOE Web site at www.doe.virginia.gov; or through the VDOE Office of Special Education Instructional Services at (804) 225-2932, the toll free voice number (800) 422-2083, or text users dial 711 (Relay); or the Office of Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction at (804) 225-2880.

Supporting the Identification and Achievement of the Twice-Exceptional Student: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are some of the special education and gifted education terms and definitions that will be encountered in the document?

The following terms will be used throughout the document. The definitions have been provided to increase clarity and enhance the readability of the document.

“Continuum of alternative placements” means the placements as listed in the regulatory definition of “special education” that includes instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions. The continuum of alternative placements, as described in the state least restrictive environment regulations, includes provision for supplementary services (e.g., resource room or services or itinerant instruction) to be provided in conjunction with regular education class placement. No single model for the delivery of services to any specific population or category of children with disabilities is acceptable for meeting the requirement for a continuum of alternative placements. All placement decisions shall be based on the individual needs of each child. Documentation of all placement alternatives considered and rationale for the placement selection are required (8VAC20-81-10 and 8VAC20-81-130).

“Gifted students” means those students in public elementary, middle, and secondary schools beginning with kindergarten (through twelfth grade) who demonstrate high levels of accomplishment or who show the potential for higher levels of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment. Their aptitudes and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs. These students will be identified by professionally qualified persons in the public school division through the use of multiple criteria as having potential or demonstrated aptitudes in one or more of the following areas depending on

the service options provided by the school division: general intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, career and technical aptitude, and visual or performing arts aptitude (8VAC20-40-10 et. seq.).

“Gifted service options” means the instructional approaches, settings, and staffing selected and offered by the school division for the delivery of appropriate service or services provided to eligible gifted students based on their assessed needs in their areas of strength (8VAC20-40-10 et. seq.).

“Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)” means special education and related services that (8VAC20-81-10):

- Are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge;
- Meet the standards of the Virginia Board of Education;
- Include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, middle school or secondary school education in Virginia; and
- Are provided in conformity with an individualized education program that meets the requirements of Virginia’s special education regulations.

“Individualized education program (IEP)” means a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a team meeting in accordance with federal and state regulations. The IEP specifies the individual educational needs of the child and what special education and related services are necessary to meet the child’s educational needs (8VAC20-81-10).

“Least restrictive environment (LRE)” means to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special class-

es, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (8VAC20-81-10).

“Section 504” means that section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which is designed to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (29 USC § 701 et seq.).

“Special education” means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent(s), to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in a classroom, in the home, in hospitals, in institutions, and in other settings and instruction in physical education. The term includes each of the following if it meets the requirements of the definition of special education (8VAC20-81-10):

- Speech-language pathology services or any other related service, if the service is considered special education rather than a related service under state standards;
- Vocational education; and
- Travel training.

“Specially designed instruction” means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction (8VAC20-81-10):

- To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and
- To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards that apply to all children within the jurisdiction of the local educational agency.

“Supplementary aids and services” means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in general education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with children without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with the least restrictive environment requirements (8VAC20-81-10).

“Twice-exceptional students” means those students identified as gifted by the identification and placement committee for the school division’s gifted education program and identified with a disability as defined by federal and state special education regulations.

“504 Plan” refers to a plan developed in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. A disability, under Section 504, is defined as a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities are caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, reading, communicating, thinking, sleeping, eating, bending and many major bodily functions. Similar to an IEP, a 504 plan describes the accommodations, modifications and/or services that will be provided to a child with a disability. The 504 Plan must ensure the child’s educational needs are met as adequately as the education needs of nondisabled peers.

2. Who are twice-exceptional students?

Twice-exceptional students are children, kindergarten through twelfth grade, who are identified as gifted by the identification and placement committee for the school division’s gifted education program and are also identified as a child with a disability as defined by Virginia’s special education regulations. The gifted identification qualifies the student for educational service options that support performance at increasing levels of complexity that differ significantly from those of their age-level peers. Identification as a child with a disability entitles the student to an individualized education program (IEP) in accordance with state and federal guidelines or a 504 Plan¹. The IEP specifies the individual educational

¹*General education students who do not meet the eligibility criteria under Virginia’s special education regulations but who still require some accommodations due to a current physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity may qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. Instead of having an IEP, students who qualify under Section 504 are required to have a plan that specifies any accommodations, modifications, and/or services that will be provided to ensure the student receives a free and appropriate public education. Local school divisions must have policies and procedures that govern the development, implementation and management of 504 plans in accordance with Section 504 and its implementing regulations.*

needs of the child and what special education and related services are necessary to meet the child's educational needs (8VAC20-81-110).

According to the U. S. Department of Education's 2007 Digest of Education Statistics, there were approximately 3.2 million students identified as gifted and 6.6 million students identified with a disability in the public schools. Educational demographic studies estimate that two to five percent of the gifted population will have disabilities. The reverse statistic is that two to five percent of the students with disabilities may be gifted. However, because of their unique characteristics, current state and national data indicate that twice-exceptional learners are often underidentified and underserved in gifted and/or special education programs (Dix & Schafer, 1996; Maker, 1977; and Whitmore, 1980).

3. What are the most common characteristics of twice-exceptional learners?

Twice-exceptional students are an extremely diverse group. The following characteristics may be among those observed in twice-exceptional students. However, these do not all have to be present for a student to be identified as a twice-exceptional learner because some characteristics may be stronger in one student than in another student (Higgins, Baldwin & Pereles, 2000; Weinfeld, Barnes-Robinson, Jeweler, & Shevitz, 2006).

- ◆ Shows high verbal ability, but may use language in inappropriate ways and at inappropriate times;
- ◆ Demonstrates strong observation skills but has difficulty with memory skills;
- ◆ Excels in solving “real-world” problems; has outstanding critical thinking and decision-making skills; often (independently) develops compensatory skills;
- ◆ Shows attention deficit problems but may concentrate for long periods of time in areas of interest;
- ◆ Has strong questioning attitudes; may appear disrespectful when questioning information, facts, etc., presented by teachers, adults, or other authority figures;
- ◆ Displays unusual imagination; frequently generates original and at times rather “un-

usual” ideas; extremely divergent in thought; may appear to daydream when generating ideas;

- ◆ May be unwilling to take risks with regard to academics and yet, willing to take risks in nonschool areas without consideration of consequences;
- ◆ Can use humor to divert attention from school failure; may use humor to make fun of peers or to avoid trouble;
- ◆ Appears immature relative to cognitive ability and chronological age since such students may use anger, crying, and/or withdrawal to express feelings and deal with difficulties;
- ◆ Requires frequent teacher support and feedback in deficit areas; highly independent in other areas; can appear stubborn and inflexible;
- ◆ May be sensitive regarding disability area(s); highly critical of self and others, including teachers; can express concern about the feelings of others even while engaging in antisocial behavior;
- ◆ May not be accepted by other children and may feel isolated; may be perceived as a loner since he/she does not fit a typical model for either a gifted student or a student with a disability; sometimes has difficulty being accepted by peers due to poor social skills;
- ◆ Is often a leader among the more nontraditional students demonstrating strong “street-wise” behavior; or conversely, the disability may interfere with the student's ability to exercise leadership skills;
- ◆ Shows a wide range of interests but may be thwarted in pursuing them due to processing or learning problems;
- ◆ May have very focused interests, for example, a passion about certain topics to the exclusion of others, often not related to school subjects;
- ◆ May be unable to think in a linear fashion; has difficulty following directions;
- ◆ May have extreme difficulty in the written language areas;
- ◆ May experience reading problems due to cognitive processing deficits;
- ◆ May struggle with basic skills due to cogni-

- ♦ May demonstrate exceptional talents in visual and performing arts; and
- ♦ Often has excellent higher order thinking skills but struggles with rudimentary activities.

4. How are twice-exceptional students addressed in the state and federal regulations?

Federal regulations do not exist for gifted education services. Overall guidelines for school divisions to identify and serve gifted students are provided in the *Virginia Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students* at [8VAC20-40-10 et. seq.](#) Each school division provides its own *identification of and services for* gifted students in accordance with its local plan for gifted education. However, the gifted education regulations acknowledge the underrepresentation of students who are culturally different, have disabilities, or come from low socioeconomic backgrounds in gifted education programs. As a result, school divisions are encouraged to make an effort to identify for gifted education services students with disabilities and students from other underrepresented groups.

Special education is mandated by federal and state law. *The Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* can be found under the Virginia Administrative Code at [8VAC20-81-10 et. seq.](#) Federal regulations governing special education services can be found at [34 CFR Part 300](#). In addition, each school division has its own special education evaluation and eligibility procedures that must be consistent with the federal and state regulations governing special education. Although Virginia's special education regulations do not address the twice-exceptional learner specifically, they do mandate a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. School divisions are required to take steps to ensure that children with disabilities have the same variety of educational programs and services available to them as their non-disabled peers; this includes gifted service options, if appropriate. If a student with a disability meets the criteria for gifted education services within the school division, the gifted identification and placement team will determine the service options best

suitable to meet the student's gifted education needs. It should be noted that if a student with a disability is gifted, the gifted team does not determine special education services unless the team is also a group that meets the requirements of an IEP team. Gifted education does not provide individual student plans for students identified as gifted but provides division-level service options for all identified gifted students.

5. What is the parents' role in the gifted and special education identification process?

The role of parents is clearly defined in both the special education and gifted education process. Parents should be involved in all phases of the identification process, which includes the referral, evaluation, eligibility, IEP and/or gifted plan development, and implementation process. Both special education and gifted education regulations require parent notification and written consent for evaluation, placement and implementation of special education and/or gifted education services (Gifted Education Regulations: 8VAC20-40-55; Special Education Regulations: 8VAC20-81-170).

In accordance with state gifted education guidelines, parents can nominate or refer students for gifted education identification and services within the school division's guidelines. Parents can help to provide documentation of strengths and abilities in various academic areas, contributing to the body of evidence that supports the gifted identification. In addition, parents can provide information and documentation to help educators understand how the student learns and how a student's disability impacts the learning process.

Both special education and gifted education regulations allow for referrals for evaluations from parents, legal guardians, teachers, professionals, students, peers, or others (8VAC20-40-40 and 8VAC20-81-60A). However, a referral does not necessarily lead to the evaluation of the student for special education. A special education evaluation may be requested at any time, although, with documented reasons and prior written notice as required under 8VAC20-81-170C, the school division may refuse a parent's request for an evaluation. The notice must

be given to the parents of a child with a suspected disability in "...a reasonable time before the public agency refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of free appropriate public education to the child." (Id.). Parents have a right to challenge the school division's decision not to evaluate by initiating a due process hearing and/or requesting mediation to resolve the dispute. Additional information about mediation and due process is available in the special education regulations at 8VAC20-81-190 and 8VAC20-81-210 or in the [*Parents' Guide to Special Education Dispute Resolution*](#) found at www.doe.virginia.gov.

Under the gifted education regulations, school divisions are required to develop procedures that ensure parents and legal guardians have rights of written notification, consent and appeal. Requests filed by parents or legal guardians to appeal any action of the identification and placement committee shall be filed within ten instructional days of receipt of notification of the action by the division. The process shall include an opportunity to meet with an administrator to discuss the decision (8VAC20-40-55).

In summary, parents and legal guardians should be collaborative partners in developing educational services for their twice-exceptional learners. They have valuable insight into their children's needs for a successful educational learning experience. Parents or legal guardians can help provide documentation of strengths, weaknesses and abilities in various academic and social areas, knowledge of accommodations that work for their child; and contribute to the body of evidence that supports the gifted and special education identification and service options.

6. What types of assessment data should be collected in the identification process?

The Virginia Department of Education provides school divisions with guidance documents regarding statutory and regulatory requirements in the identification of students who are gifted and students with, or suspected of having, a disability. In determining a student's eligibility for special education services, regulations require that a variety of assessments be used, that they be administered for purposes for

which they are valid and reliable, and that they take into consideration the child's suspected disability.

The eligibility committees for both gifted and special education identification should be familiar with identification practices and criteria surrounding each area of disability and giftedness. They should examine relevant data accordingly. Some standardized tests may be examined for strengths and weaknesses in specific subgroup categories as opposed to examining an overall broad score. Other assessment data that can be reviewed include student portfolios and work products, teacher and parent checklists or questionnaires, student academic performance, classroom observations, individual interviews, and records of student accomplishment.

A complete listing of the requirements for special education evaluation and eligibility processes are available in the special education regulations at 8VAC20-81-60 through 8VAC20-81-80. Likewise, identification for gifted education services includes the review of valid and reliable student data gathered from a variety of sources (Gifted Education Regulations: 8VAC20-40-20).

7. What criteria might be considered when identifying a learner for gifted and special education services?

State regulations and local policy governing the procedures and criteria for the identification of gifted learners and the identification of students with disabilities must be followed by the school division. Many twice-exceptional students are identified as gifted as a result of a gifted screening process and later identified with a disability as a result of their inability to demonstrate academic achievement commensurate with their ability. Others are referred for identification as gifted when their superior abilities are discovered as part of the process of identifying their disabilities (Montgomery County, Maryland Public Schools, n.d.).

Because of the complex profile the twice-exceptional student exhibits, special education eligibility teams and/or gifted identification/place-ment committees should consider both giftedness and disability evaluations when both are suspected. When

identifying a student who may be twice-exceptional, many specialists in the fields of gifted and special education have suggested the following considerations (Brody & Mills, 1997; Johnson, Karnes, and Carr, 1977; McCoach, Kehle, Bray and Siegle, 2004; Neilsen, 2002; and Silverman, 1989):

- ◆ Use multiple data sources for gifted programming identification: intelligence and achievement tests, teacher reports, creativity tests, student interviews, self-referral, portfolio, and family or peer referral;
- ◆ Avoid combining multiple pieces of data into a single score; combining scores allows lower scores to depress the total score, thereby disqualifying students with strengths from gifted programs;
- ◆ Review achievement and aptitude subscores for strengths and weaknesses;
- ◆ Compare expected performance on statewide standardized tests and psycho-educational assessments with actual performance using the student's daily classroom achievement, as well as other authentic assessments;
- ◆ Use both formal (such as standardized tests) and informal (such as student class work) assessments;
- ◆ Consult with families about student performance outside of school;
- ◆ Be aware that identification is seldom pursued for students whose gifts and disabilities mask one another;
- ◆ Be aware of subtle indicators of exceptionality in students; and
- ◆ Use culturally sensitive assessment processes to prevent language and cultural differences from creating bias in the identification process.

8. What service options are available to twice-exceptional learners?

The service options addressed in both the Virginia gifted and special education regulations apply to the twice-exceptional learner. This includes a range of special education and related services that are provided as identified by the student's IEP team. These services could include, but are not limited to, consultative services, accommodations, assistive technology, and/or direct services with

specially designed instruction in the least restrictive environment. The continuum of placement options, from regular classes to residential facilities, as well as service delivery models, must be provided based on individual needs. Likewise, gifted education services could range from differentiation of instruction in the regular classroom to center-based programs, depending on the service options available within the school division or region. The exact nature of service options appropriate for a particular student within a school division would be determined by the gifted identification and placement committee and special education IEP team.

According to the Virginia gifted education regulations, service options are defined as the instructional approaches, settings, and staffing necessary for the delivery of appropriate services (based on the student's assessed needs in his or her areas of strength). In the local division's gifted education plan, school divisions must provide evidence that service options are offered from kindergarten through twelfth grade for identified gifted students. Additionally, gifted learners should receive instruction during the day or week that fosters intellectual and academic growth and provides such students the opportunity to work with age-level peers, with intellectual and academic peers, and to work independently (as appropriate).

When considering the service options for a twice-exceptional student, the IEP team, which should include a gifted education teacher or representative, must consider the unique characteristics of the individual student when determining the type, level and location of services. When the IEP or 504 plan is developed, every effort should be made to address both areas of exceptionality. The twice-exceptional student should have access to the same opportunities for acceleration and enrichment as his/her gifted peers, when appropriate. In order to access these gifted service options, the twice-exceptional student may require accommodations and services which, if applicable, would be indicated in the student's IEP. Therefore, it is important that the gifted education teacher have access to and be familiar with the student's IEP. Finally, opportunities for the instruction of skills and strategies in the areas that are affected by the student's disability must be provided.

9. Can a Response to Intervention (RtI) model be used with Twice-Exceptional Learners?

In Virginia, Response to Intervention (RtI) is a general education initiative that uses a multi-tier approach to early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. According to the VDOE guidance document, [*Responsive Instruction: Refining Our Work of Teaching All Children*](#), the RtI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of tiered intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. The student's response to each intervention is closely monitored to assess the learning rate, level of performance of individual students, and to determine the intensity and duration of interventions.

The RtI framework may be appropriate to address an area of weakness for some gifted learners. However, if a gifted learner who is participating in an RtI process is referred to special education and found eligible for special education services, the level of participation of the twice-exceptional learner in the RtI practices and interventions is determined by the IEP team. In addition, according to special education regulations, the student's special education services cannot be disrupted, even for participation in an intervention, unless an IEP committee reconvenes to make a revision or amendment to the current program, and parental consent is obtained.

Although in Virginia the RtI process has been utilized primarily to address the needs of struggling learners, in some states such as Colorado, a tiered framework of instruction has been used as a method to address the individual needs for the twice-exceptional learner based on areas of strength. The progress monitoring component has provided useful information when making decisions on the pace, depth, and complexity of the instruction.

For information concerning RtI in Virginia, the VDOE guidance document, [*Responsive Instruction: Refining Our Work of Teaching All Children*](#), can be found on the Virginia Department of Educa-

tion's Web site at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/response_intervention/guidance/responsive_instruction.pdf. Additional RtI resources are also available at the Department's Web site at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/response_intervention/index.shtml.

10. Do the IEP components, including goals and accommodations, apply to the gifted education service options?

Yes, the IEP and its components apply to gifted education services as documented in the IEP. An IEP is designed to specify the individual educational needs of a child, and the special education and related services necessary to meet the child's educational needs. In developing the IEP, the team is required to consider in part the strengths of the child, the concerns of the parent(s) for enhancing the education of their child, the results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the child, and the academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child (8VAC20-81-110F).

Once the IEP is developed, Virginia special education regulations give the school divisions the responsibility of ensuring that the child's IEP is accessible to each teacher and all service providers who are responsible for its implementation. Educators of gifted learners should be involved in the development of the twice-exceptional student's IEP, and must be informed of their specific responsibilities related to implementing the child's IEP (the specific accommodations, modifications, and supports that shall be provided for the child in accordance with the IEP) (8VAC20-81-110B).

In addition, Virginia's *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students in Virginia* address IEP implementation. The regulations reinforce the role of gifted education programs as service providers in implementing the IEP for twice-exceptional students. The gifted regulations require that accommodations or modifications determined by the IEP team be incorporated into the student's gifted education services (8VAC20-40-60).

11. What types of instructional strategies, modifications and accommodations may be utilized for twice-exceptional students to participate in the gifted curriculum?

Special education regulations require that supplementary aids and services be provided to ensure the identified student has access to the general education curriculum. The accommodations and modifications should provide the student an opportunity to advance appropriately toward attaining individualized annual goals, to be involved and progress in the general curriculum, and to participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities with other children with and without disabilities (8VAC20-81-110 G.4).

Classroom teachers must have the support of gifted education and special education personnel to effectively address the unique educational needs of the twice-exceptional learner. Various instructional strategies should be employed to nurture students' strengths and improve any areas of weakness. Students' social and emotional needs are important to consider when selecting and implementing instructional strategies. It is recommended that teachers of the twice-exceptional learner use research-based strategies, such as curriculum compacting or accelerating, that will allow the student to compensate for his/her areas of weakness while providing an opportunity to demonstrate strengths.

When selecting modifications and accommodations for the twice-exceptional learner, the IEP team will consider the strengths and weaknesses of the learner. The type of modifications and accommodations recommended is based on the individual needs of the student. It should be noted that accommodations do not change the content of the curriculum, but how the content is presented or how the student will demonstrate mastery. Modifications may, however, require a change in the level of difficulty of the content. Appendix A provides suggestions on instructional strategies, accommodations, and interventions that may be used with twice-exceptional learners. Also, the books, *Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*, by Carol Ann Tomlinson; *Smart Kids with Learning Difficulties*, by

Weinfeld, Barnes-Robinson, Jeweler, and Shevitz; and the VDOE [Enhanced Scope and Sequence Plus](#) (available at www.ttaonline.org) are examples of resources that provide strategies and techniques that may be useful when addressing the needs of the twice-exceptional learner.

In addition, VDOE, through George Mason University, has created the Accessible Instructional Materials Center of Virginia (AIM-VA) to produce and provide, at no cost to school divisions, accessible instructional and educational materials meeting National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS) requirements for blind students and those with print disabilities. Accessible instructional materials (AIM) are printed textbooks and educational materials that are converted to alternate formats, such as Braille, large print, electronic text, and audio recordings, which are requested by a local school division for use by students with disabilities in the classroom. These materials would be considered an appropriate accommodation for twice exceptional students with a reading disability such as dyslexia.

Additional information concerning Accessible Instructional Materials can be found at <http://www.aimva.org/> and information on other forms of assistive technology can also be found on the VDOE website at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/iep_instruct_svcs/assistive_technology/index.shtml.

12. What should special education teachers consider concerning the twice-exceptional student's giftedness when addressing his or her area of disability?

Just as it is important for the gifted education teacher to understand the characteristics of the twice-exceptional learner's disability, it is important for the special education teacher to be aware of the characteristics of the twice-exceptional learner's giftedness. Due to their academic weaknesses and their extreme abilities, many twice-exceptional learners have low self-esteem that may manifest itself as anger, disruptive behavior, clowning or withdrawal within the gifted and/or special education classroom setting. Consequently, there should be collaboration between the special education teacher and the gifted education teacher to ensure that both areas of exceptionality are appropriately

addressed, that there is consistency in the behavioral and academic expectations in all settings, and that the student's strengths and interests are nurtured (Reis & Colbert, 2004).

Through an appropriate service model, the special education teacher might provide explicit instruction in the area of weakness, model and teach meta-cognitive skills and assist the learner with the development of compensatory strategies and self-determination skills. The special education teacher will typically oversee the development and implementation of the IEP and monitor the student's progress.

13. What is the role of a twice-exceptional learner in his or her own educational planning?

Best practices suggest that parents, teachers and other school professionals, such as counselors or psychologists of twice-exceptional learners discuss with the student at an early age, his or her strengths and weaknesses and the way he or she learns. Research has shown that self-awareness, engaging in proactivity, perseverance, goal setting, the presence and use of effective support systems, and emotional coping strategies help lead persons with disabilities to greater success. Researchers believe that these activities decrease the student's level of academic frustration and increase self-confidence and the student's ability to advocate for themselves (Field, 1998).

If self-advocacy or self-determination practices are not initiated with the student at an earlier age, then special education regulations require that the student participate in the IEP transition planning by attending meetings before the student turns 14 years old. Beginning with the first IEP to be in effect when the student is age 14, the IEP team, including the student, must address transition planning. This gives the student the opportunity to have input into the IEP development by discussing with the team his or her interests and preferences, addressing postsecondary education planning, and learning self-advocacy/determination skills. The VDOE's Web site at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/transition_svcs/index.shtml provides information for

students and parents that address transition, including information about employment, higher education options and legal rights for adults with disabilities.

14. What services "follow" the student if the student transfers to another school division?

Federal and state regulations governing special education services require that when students identified as needing special education services in one school division transfer to a different division, they must be provided by the new school division, in consultation with the parent, services comparable to those described in the child's IEP. To ensure a free appropriate public education, with the consent of the parent, the new school division may adopt and implement the child's IEP from a previous school division, or conduct evaluations, and develop a new IEP based on the new evaluations. However, if the new school division is unable to obtain the IEP from the previous one or from the parent, the new school division is not required to provide special education and related services to the child. The new school division shall place the student in a general education program and conduct an evaluation if the new school division determines that an evaluation is necessary (8VAC20-81-120).

In contrast, when a twice-exceptional learner transfers to another school division, the gifted education services offered by the new school division may be different from those services offered by the transferring school division. In Virginia, each division is allowed to specifically determine which areas of giftedness it wishes to identify and service. As a result, each division has its own unique identification process for giftedness and its own unique educational services for gifted students. While documentation from the previous school division can be transferred to the new school division, the utilization of the documentation may or may not be instrumental in the new school division's identification procedures. Students may be identified as gifted in one school division, but not meet the identification criteria standards in a new school division. Simply stated, gifted education services do not necessarily transfer between divisions.

15. What additional online resources may be available to learn more about twice-exceptional learners?

Listed below are some additional online resources that can provide more detailed information. This is not an exhaustive list of resources, but provides a sample of frequently used Web sites in the fields of both gifted and special education.

<http://www.ldonline.org>

LD Online - resources and information about students with learning disabilities and Attention Deficient Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)

<http://www.nagc.org>

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

<http://www.vagifted.org>

Virginia Association for the Gifted (VAG)

<http://www.cec.sped.org>

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

<http://www.sengifted.org>

Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)

<http://www.uniquelygifted.org>

Online collection of resources for gifted children with special needs

<http://ttaonline.org/>

The Virginia Department of Education's Training/Technical Assistance Centers (T/TAC) provide online resources for persons serving children and youth with disabilities

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Appendix A - Interventions

When planning for the twice-exceptional students, gifted and/or IEP teams may want to consider the following list of possible technology, materials, methods, and instructional strategies when determining the types of interventions/accommodations that may be necessary to provide greater access to appropriately challenging instruction. When choosing interventions, it is important to be sure there is a match between the child's specific disability and the intervention(s) chosen. This list is not all inclusive, and it suggests effective teaching practices that would benefit all students. It was adapted with permission from Montgomery County, Maryland Public Schools guidance document *A Guidebook for Twice-Exceptional Student: Supporting the Achievement of Gifted Students with Special Needs*.

Overcoming Obstacles Related to READING

Assistive Technology for Students

- ◆ CD-ROMs with audio component
- ◆ Electronic spellers that speak words aloud
- ◆ Books on tape and digital books
- ◆ Computer programs that allow words to be read aloud
- ◆ Text-to-speech software

Instructional Materials

- ◆ Primary sources such as interviews, guest speakers, and demonstrations
- ◆ Multimedia presentations
- ◆ Tape-recorded directions or tests
- ◆ Text study guides and graphic organizers to help students locate information
- ◆ High-interest, appropriate-level reading material and multilevel texts about the same topic
- ◆ Above-grade-level, high-interest reading material
- ◆ Rich literature experiences
- ◆ High interest or real-world experiences
- ◆ Access to challenging programs- Example: College of William and Mary Saturday and Summer Enrichment Program, Junior Great Books, Governor's Schools
- ◆ Expository reading experiences
- ◆ Visuals (outlines, advanced organizers, graphic organizers, charts, photographs, diagrams, and maps) to aid in understanding written information
- ◆ Word banks

Teaching/Assessment Methods

- ◆ Develop interest and curiosity by activating prior knowledge before reading
- ◆ Use a multiple intelligence approach
- ◆ Begin with a real-world experience or project
- ◆ Teach through the arts (drama, visual arts, poetry)
- ◆ Utilize simulations and moral dilemmas
- ◆ Encourage reading related to students' areas of interest
- ◆ Set purposes for reading and state what students should know after reading the text
- ◆ Ask comprehension questions building to higher-level questions
- ◆ Cue students to important words and concepts verbally and through highlighting
- ◆ Teach vocabulary in context
- ◆ Give students the opportunity to read silently before reading aloud
- ◆ Allow students to choose whether or not to read aloud
- ◆ Pair students who have strong decoding skills with weak decoders
- ◆ Allow students to do vocabulary webs, literature webs, and other difficult tasks in small groups
- ◆ Read directions or tests aloud
- ◆ Allow additional time for reading
- ◆ Teach students to outline, underline, or highlight important points in reading
- ◆ Encourage students to take notes while reading
- ◆ Offer support and clarification for imbedded directions in text
- ◆ Read text aloud to student

Instruction

- ◆ Explicitly teach phonological awareness and phonics
- ◆ Use multisensory reading approach
- ◆ Use a rule-based approach to teaching reading
- ◆ Teach students sight vocabulary
- ◆ Teach students how to use a textbook (index, table of contents, glossary, charts, tables, captions, and bold text)
- ◆ Teach outlining and note taking
- ◆ Teach reading strategies
- ◆ Teach students to read for meaning using background knowledge and contextual clues

Overcoming Obstacles Related to WRITING

Assistive Technology for students

- ◆ Voice-recognition software
- ◆ Writing organizational software
- ◆ Electronic spellers and dictionaries
- ◆ Computer word processor with spelling and grammar check or talking word processor
- ◆ Portable keyboards
- ◆ Word-prediction software
- ◆ Programs that allow writing to be read aloud, to provide for audio spell check, proofreading, word prediction, and homophone distinction
- ◆ Tape recorder for transcription from student dictation

Instructional Materials

- ◆ Step-by-step written directions
- ◆ Proofreading checklist
- ◆ Scoring rubrics, models, and anchor papers for students to evaluate their own work
- ◆ Graphic organizers
- ◆ Guides such as story starters, webs, story charts, outlines
- ◆ Dictionaries, word banks, and thesauruses
- ◆ Personal dictionaries of misused and misspelled words
- ◆ Highlighters to indicate errors/corrections
- ◆ Copy of teacher's notes or of another student's notes (NCR paper)
- ◆ Pencil grips
- ◆ Paper with raised lines
- ◆ Mechanical pencils
- ◆ Slant boards

Teaching/Assessment Methods

- ◆ Focus on quality rather than quantity
- ◆ Prepare storyboards, guided imagery, dramatization, or projects before the writing process
- ◆ Set important purpose for writing such as writing for publication, writing to an expert, or writing to a famous person
- ◆ Allow students to write in area of interest or expertise
- ◆ Provide a multiple intelligence approach
- ◆ Allow students to demonstrate understanding through alternative ways/products
- ◆ Reduce or alter written requirements
- ◆ Break down assignments into smaller, more manageable parts
- ◆ Allow additional time
- ◆ Permit work with partners or small groups to confer for revising, editing, and proofreading
- ◆ Proofread for one type of error at a time
- ◆ Permit words or phrases instead of complete sentences
- ◆ Provide artistic (visual, spatial, and performing) products to communicate knowledge
- ◆ Provide scientific and technological products to communicate knowledge
- ◆ Provide dictated response to a person or tape recorder
- ◆ Provide a portfolio assessment of products and performances as well as grading writing products
- ◆ Allow alternative spelling
- ◆ Allow manuscript, cursive, or typewritten work

Instructional Strategies

- ◆ The writing process
- ◆ Prewriting strategies, including brainstorming, making a web, and drawing about the topic
- ◆ Rewriting questions into answer form
- ◆ Writing for a variety of purposes
- ◆ Combining words into meaningful sentences
- ◆ Formulating topic sentences
- ◆ Organizing sentences and incorporating adequate details and support statements into organized paragraphs
- ◆ Language conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling, usage)

- ◆ History/structure of language
- ◆ Keyboarding skills
- ◆ Word processing
- ◆ Using multimedia resources
- ◆ Handwriting in an alternative way
- ◆ The “traits” of writing

Overcoming Obstacles Related to ORGANIZATION

Assistive Technology for Students

- ◆ Use electronic organizers
- ◆ Use software organization programs
- ◆ Tape record assignments
- ◆ E-mail assignments from school to students’ home accounts

Instructional Materials

- ◆ Visual models, storyboards, Venn diagrams, matrices, and flow charts
- ◆ Study guides that assist with locating information and answers
- ◆ Highlighters, index tabs, and colored stickers
- ◆ Assignment books and calendars for recording assignments
- ◆ Outlines, webs, diagrams, and other graphic organizers

Teaching/Assessment Methods

- ◆ Use short, simple directions
- ◆ Provide advanced organizers regarding what students will know by the end of the lesson
- ◆ Post class and homework assignments in the same area each day and ensure that students record them and/or have a printed copy
- ◆ Verbally review class and homework assignments
- ◆ List and verbally review step-by-step directions for assignments
- ◆ Work with students to establish specific due dates for short assignments and time frames for long-term assignments
- ◆ Break up tasks into workable and obtainable steps
- ◆ Give examples and specific steps to accomplish tasks
- ◆ Provide check points for long-term assignments and monitor progress frequently

- ◆ Help students review and summarize important information and directions
- ◆ Utilize a multisensory or multiple intelligence approach to teaching organization skills
- ◆ Invite student questions regarding directions and assignments
- ◆ Provide students with a list of needed materials and their locations
- ◆ Make time to organize materials and assignments
- ◆ Encourage study buddies
- ◆ Provide homework hotline or structured homework assistance
- ◆ Post a daily routine and explain any changes in that routine
- ◆ Provide an uncluttered work area
- ◆ Label and store materials in designated locations
- ◆ Provide a specific location for students to place completed work
- ◆ Provide samples of finished products

Instructional Study Skills for Students

- ◆ Prioritize the tasks
- ◆ Ask questions regarding unclear directions and assignments
- ◆ Practice metacognition
- ◆ Break long-term assignments into manageable components
- ◆ Utilize note taking
- ◆ Make it a routine to prepare for each class
- ◆ Use a system for organizing notebooks and lockers
- ◆ Use software organization programs
- ◆ Use assignment books, calendars, electronic organizers, visual models, and graphic organizers
- ◆ Access homework help

Overcoming Obstacles Related to MEMORY

Assistive Technology for students

- ◆ Teachers use software programs as an alternative or additional way of presenting information
- ◆ Students tape record directions or information

- ◆ Students use software programs for organization of key points
- ◆ Teachers add notes about directions or key points as part of assignment that is given on the computer

Instructional Materials

- ◆ Materials that use multiple modalities, including art and simulations, when presenting directions, explanations, and instructional content
- ◆ Materials that have multiple intelligences approaches
- ◆ Materials which are meaningful to students
- ◆ Copies of the information that highlight key facts

Teaching /Assessment Methods

- ◆ Students repeat directions or information back to teacher
- ◆ Students repeat information to themselves
- ◆ Teacher repeats information or directions
- ◆ Teacher reinforces students for remembering details
- ◆ Students recall important details at the end of a lesson or period of time
- ◆ Students sequence activities after a lesson or event
- ◆ Students teach information to other students
- ◆ Students deliver the schedule of events to other students
- ◆ Teacher delivers directions, explanations, and instructional content in a clear manner and at an appropriate pace
- ◆ Teacher provides students with environmental cues and prompts such as posted rules and steps for performing tasks
- ◆ Teacher provides students with written list of materials and directions
- ◆ Students use resources in the environment to recall information (notes, textbooks, pictures, etc.)
- ◆ Teacher gives auditory and visual cues to help students recall information
- ◆ Teacher relates information presented to students' previous experiences
- ◆ Teacher emphasizes key concepts

- ◆ Teacher reviews prior lesson's key concepts and vocabulary before moving on
- ◆ Students outline, highlight, underline, or summarize information that should be remembered
- ◆ Teacher provides adequate opportunities for repetition of information through different experiences and modalities
- ◆ Teacher provides students with information from a variety of sources
- ◆ Teacher tells students what to listen for when being given directions or receiving information
- ◆ Students use advanced organizers
- ◆ Teacher uses visual imagery

Teachers should teach students to:

- ◆ Use associative cues or mnemonic devices
- ◆ Transform information from one modality to another (e.g., from verbal to a diagram or from visual to verbal)
- ◆ Question any directions, explanations, and instructions they do not understand
- ◆ Deliver increasingly long verbal messages
- ◆ How to organize information into smaller units
- ◆ Take notes and outline
- ◆ Highlight and summarize information
- ◆ Recognize key words
- ◆ Use resources in the environment to recall information (notes, textbooks, pictures, etc.)
- ◆ Practice memory skills by engaging in activities which are purposeful, such as delivering messages or being in charge of a classroom task
- ◆ Practice repetition of information
- ◆ Engage in memory games and activities
- ◆ Categorize
- ◆ How to use organizers such as lists, tables, and graphics
- ◆ Use visual imagery
- ◆ Store and retrieve information in a systematic manner



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