

## Book Review

### **To Be Gifted and Learning Disabled: Strength-Based Strategies for Helping Twice-Exceptional Students With LD, ADHD, AS, and More (3rd ed.)**

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The third edition of *To Be Gifted and Learning Disabled: Strength-Based Strategies for Helping Twice-Exceptional Students with LD, ADHD, AS, and More* was written by doctors Susan M. Baum, Robin M. Schader, and Steven V. Owen, and is published by Prufrock Press. This update provides readers with an updated look at this popular resource.

The authors define twice-exceptional, or 2e, as “high-ability students who may have any mix of specific learning disabilities, attention deficits, executive functioning issues, anxiety, autism spectrum disorders, and social and behavioral issues” (Baum, Schader, & Owen, 2017, pp. 1–2). In this revision, they include both practical and theoretical information to help these students, their parents, and educators. In addition, the authors provide case studies and examples of working with twice-exceptional students in hopes that readers will take what is learned in this book and apply it to 2e students in their classroom or at home.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I provides an overview of twice-exceptional students, including an in-depth look at the history of the term. The authors do a strong job of discussing various areas of twice-exceptionalities and note that a dual diagnosis can be quite complex. With that comes the need for serving students through a “strength-based, talent-focused approach” (p. 2). They also use a metaphor to describe 2e students, noting: “In painting, green is a mix of yellow and blue. Similarly, twice-exceptional learners are those with distinguishing strengths (yellow) and complex challenges (blue)” (p. 17). Twice-exceptional students are those who come in various

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shades of green based on their strengths and challenges, as not every learner has the same hues of yellow and blue.

Part II focuses on neurodiversity and looks at a range of factors that affect learning. This is an interesting contribution, as it helps readers understand how twice-exceptional students think and learn. As the authors noted, “When we accept that their brains are ‘wired differently’ and also embrace the belief that they have valuable contributions, we can then design optional educational environments for 2e students.” They do a nice job of explaining how students learn and then provide examples of where those with twice-exceptionalities might encounter issues (e.g., working memory, attention).

Within Part II, the authors include a chapter on misidentification and how important it is for educators and parents to understand that twice-exceptional students display gifted characteristics, and these cannot be ignored. Using an in-depth case study about a child named Blaine, as well as other vignettes, they show readers what happens when there is a wrong diagnosis and lack of an appropriate programming, as well as general misunderstanding of the issues involved.

Part III focuses on comprehensive programming for 2e students. Particularly, the chapter on identification is an important contribution. They note twice-exceptional students are typically found within three different populations: (a) students already identified as gifted, but who may be struggling; (b) students identified as having special needs, but who do not have their areas of strength addressed; and (c) students whose strengths and challenges tend to mask each other, so they have not been identified at all (they tend to appear to be of average ability, as they have learned to cope). To extend the color metaphor from earlier in the book, the authors discuss how to search for “blue” and “yellow”—the challenges and practices of identifying special needs in gifted students and the challenges and practices of identifying giftedness in students who have been identified as having special needs.

Part III also introduces the Talent Centered Model for twice-exceptional students. The authors make a strong case for the importance of talent development, as they believe “that the key to 2e students’ success is found in their strengths, interests, and talents” (p. 159).

Part IV contains strategies that will help readers enhance 2e students’ growth and meet their needs. The chapters in this section provide valuable, concrete strategies and practices that can be implemented in schools. In addition to helping readers understand what successful classrooms look like, the authors also provide tools to use when students need modifications and accommodations. Finally, they remind readers of the importance of a supportive community. Parents, educators, and counselors must work together to advocate for and meet the needs of twice-exceptional children.

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The updated edition of *To Be Gifted and Learning Disabled* is a guide that both educators and parents will find useful. The authors have made it very reader-friendly, with easy-to-read tables and figures included throughout the book. The case studies and vignettes help readers identify more closely with 2e students, giving “faces” to them. The authors remind readers that we must look at *both* the strengths (yellows) and challenges (blues) that make up a beautiful range of greens—each child comes to the table with varying abilities, and we should focus on a strength-based approach to meeting their needs. This resource should be on the shelf of anyone who works with twice-exceptional students.

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