



TWICE EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS: AFFECTIVE NEEDS AND STRATEGIES

Jessica Myers
EDSE 510

TWICE EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

Every student has their own unique learning profile that consists of numerous strengths and areas of struggle. Educators should monitor and provide the necessary supports for gifted abilities as well as challenges and disabilities. Twice exceptional students are “unique individuals with learning characteristics that are atypical of gifted students or students with disabilities” (Trail, 2011, p. 12).



STRATEGIES AND ACCOMODATIONS

Twice exceptional students need their strengths to be accommodated along with their weaknesses; otherwise this population goes through school feeling unintelligent, unrecognized, and underappreciated. Below are six strategies to meet the needs of this unique population as they discover their strengths, challenges, and succeed in their learning journey.



AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO MEET TWICE + EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT NEEDS

STRATEGY #1: NURTURE GIFTED POTENTIAL AND SUPPORTING COGNITIVE STYLE

Twice exceptional students have unique abilities that should be emphasized and used to improve in areas that the student may struggle. Students have different learning strengths and should be incorporated when creating a curriculum or instruction to engage these learners. Since students learn differently, educators need to be aware of various cognitive learning styles. Cognitive styles “account for differences in the way these students process information in terms of cognition” (Trail, 2011, p. 70). If a teacher fails to recognize a student’s learning style and the way the student process

information may lead to academic barriers. The numerous types of cognitive styles have their own unique characteristics and strategies to

Auditory- Visual Dimension (Trail, 2011, p.72)

- Visual learners are able to remember images they have seen
- Verbal learners are able to remember written or spoken words

Sequential-Conceptual Dimension (Trail, 2011, p.74)

- Sequential learners prefer learning linearly, with logical steps
- Conceptual learners focus on concepts and less on the specific details

Convergent-Divergent Dimension (Trail, 2011, p.76)

- Convergent learners enjoy problem solving by using multiple resources
- Divergent thinkers enjoy thinking outside the box

+ STRATEGY #2: SAFE AND ACCEPTING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

It is important as an educator to create a learning environment for all and a place where students feel accepted and able to learn. The classroom should supply a safe climate that values diversity and individual differences. General educators, special education teachers, specialists, and related personnel need to model how to accept others and their differences. A teacher should be able to accept that every student is different and requires flexibility when differentiating content and meeting the student's diverse needs. With this knowledge, teachers can implement explicit instruction that will not only meet student academic needs but also build esteem and resiliency.

STRATEGY #3: POSITIVE PEER RELATIONSHIPS

One characteristic of twice exceptional students is the lack of social and emotional development. According to Spekman (1993), twice exceptional students are “more prone to underachievement, low self-esteem, emotional problems, and higher dropout rates than their peers” (as cited in Trail, 2011, p. 128). With this low self-esteem and the inability to develop healthy interpersonal relationships, twice exceptional learners typically have troubles making friends and have negative association to school experiences. In the classroom, many strategies can be utilized in the classroom:

- Group students according to their interests, passions, strengths, learning styles
- As a class, brainstorm ways to build relationships with others such as:
 - Introducing yourself to others
 - Sharing, taking turns
 - How to begin and end a conversation with others
 - Talk about your passions and interests
- Practice communication skills in a structured environment where students can practice and build friendship skills.
- Model communication skills and active listening skills in the classroom
- Have students self reflect on their own social skills and what they could have done differently

(Trail, 2011, p.117)

According to Nettle, Mucherah, and Jones (2000) twice exceptional learners who participate in extracurricular activities in school are more likely going to have a positive school experience and to stay in school until they graduated (as cited in Trail, 2011, p.123). This will give the student the opportunity to explore new interest, meet new people, and interact with others in a different setting.

STRATEGY #4: POSITIVE TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

When a student shows inconsistency or fails to turn in an assignment this can impact the student and teacher relationship. A twice exceptional student might show strengths in their critical thinking skills, language, and creativity but may lack showing effort, responsibility, organization which may give the teacher a negative impression. The teacher is failing to recognize the disability portion of twice exceptional learners and how it affects their academic success. Teachers need to realize that even though the student shows little effort there might be more to the student such as their disability interfering with their class behavior, motivation, and effort. According to Temple in TedTalk, her teacher's ability to see her passions, differences, and ability to respect her way of learning made a positive impact in her life. The teacher should be understanding, be approachable, and let students know that we are there to support them as well as be flexible to create new learning experience to reach diverse needs. It is important that “teachers provide challenging learning opportunities and support their students when they struggle to learn”(Trail, 2011,p. 121).

STRATEGY #5: MOTIVATE, ENGAGE, AND CHALLENGE

To keep the students motivated and allow them to enjoy learning at school the teacher needs to ensure the class curriculum meets the student's zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is altering the content so students are able to understand a concept with guidance rather than feeling frustrated. Trail (2011) suggests various ways to meet gifted and talented learners by allowing the learner to explore numerous topics in greater depth, letting them use their preferred learning style, demonstrate their learning in a creative way, and focus on the essential skills and understandings. Lastly, teachers, special education educators, and parents need to use their child's passions to engage students in completing task and keeping them engaged in learning.

STRATEGY #6: FOSTER FAMILY DYNAMICS

Parents are the backbone to supporting their child and focusing on student strengths rather than trying to fix their child. In order to help their child exceed as a twice exceptional learner certain strategies can be used at home in order to assist in the process of sending your child to school. Parents need to consider is not fixing their child or enabling their child to stay off task or not completing school assignments. When the child is allowed to continue this behavior the child never learns natural consequence, instead they rely on their parents to get them out of the situation. Trail (2011) suggest various strategies to help parents empower their child in and outside of school such as: encouraging child to participate in community or extracurricular activities, model positive behavior and social skills, work close with the school to ensure student is receiving the interventions they need, search for opportunities for your child to explore their strengths and passions, and focus what the child can do not what they are unable to do.

Reference:

- Grandin, T. (2010, February). *Temple Grandin: The world needs all kinds of minds* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/temple_grandin_the_world_needs_all_kinds_of_minds
- Trail, Beverly A. (2011). *Twice-exceptional gifted children: Understanding, teaching and counseling gifted students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.