

INCLUDES DIGITAL
CONTENT LINK

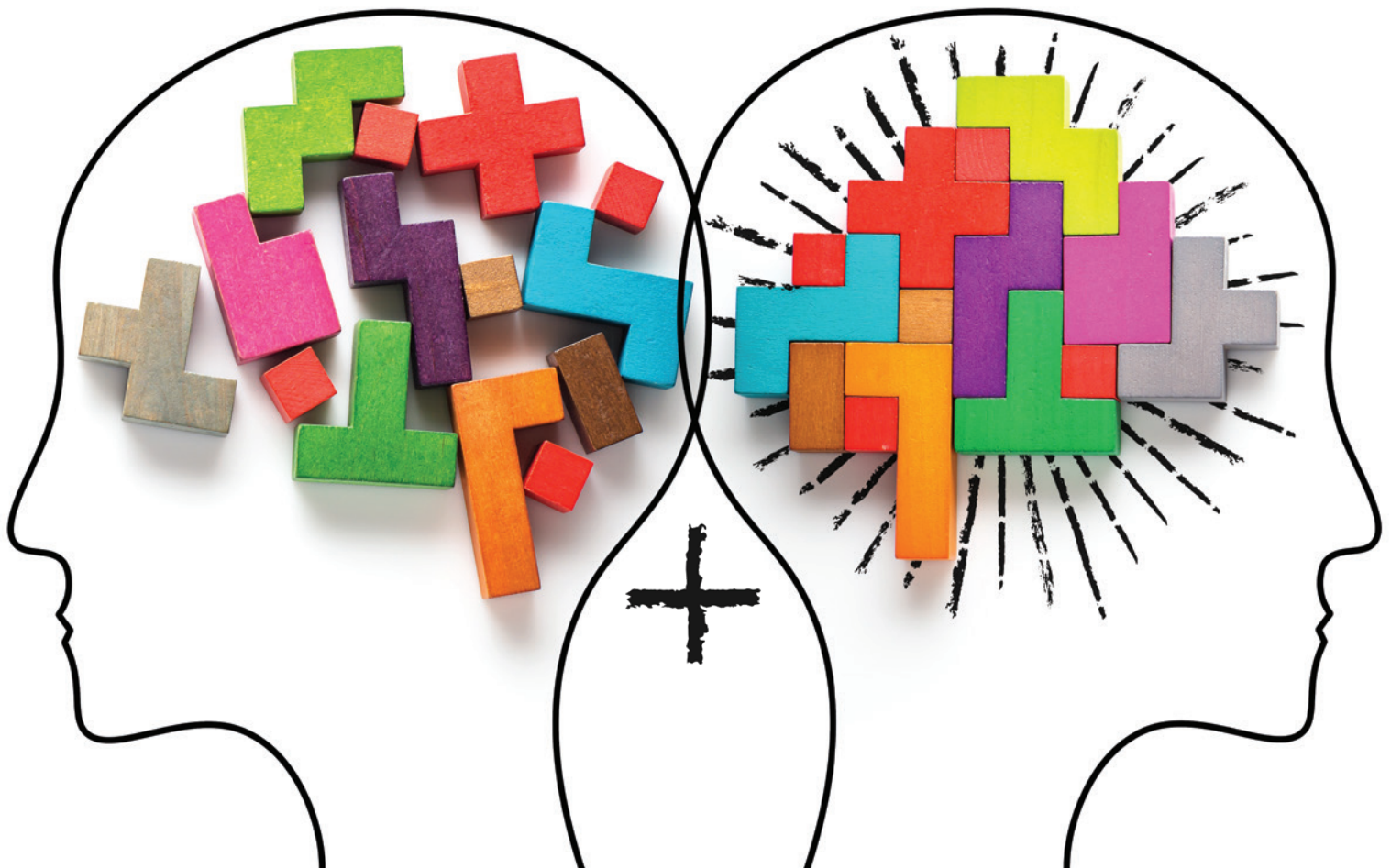


TEACHING

Twice-Exceptional

LEARNERS

in Today's
Classroom



TEACHING TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS IN TODAY'S CLASSROOM

“Emily Kircher-Morris has provided an exemplary resource for educators that clarifies who 2e learners are and how best to meet their instructional and support needs. Practitioners, college students, and researchers will appreciate the practical, research-based information provided in this text. Most impressive are the tools for educators and the student vignettes that appear throughout the book that bring the world of diverse 2e students to life. I highly recommend this text to educators and advocates of twice-exceptional, gifted, and other cognitively diverse students. Well done!”

—**Joy Lawson Davis, Ed.D.**, award-winning author, expert scholar in diversity and equity in gifted and advanced learner programs

“*Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom* is going on my list of recommended reads for all teachers. It’s loaded with practical, actionable advice that can be used by educators and parents trying to navigate the often-troubled terrain of educating a twice-exceptional child. The tables, charts, and case studies make it an engaging read, and it covers so many possible scenarios that it will have broad appeal to those in the field. I found myself nodding in agreement many times, and readers will love the respect and feeling of camaraderie that shines through every page.”

—**Lisa Van Gemert, M.Ed.T.**, founder, Gifted Guru

“*Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classrooms* is a comprehensive and user-friendly guide to understanding, supporting, educating, and serving twice-exceptional students not only in the classroom, but also in life. Emily Kircher-Morris has combined her decades of teaching and counseling with her own invaluable life experience to provide a road map for understanding the complexities of twice-exceptional profiles and how they show up in classrooms. This book is filled with strategies for capitalizing on strengths while improving the motivation, organization, and engagement of twice-exceptional learners. We will be recommending this guide to all of our clients.”

—**Dan Peters, Ph.D.**, licensed psychologist, co-founder and executive director, Summit Center

“Every teacher of the gifted needs this book! Emily Kircher-Morris has done a fantastic job of combining research and practice to provide doable supports for twice-exceptional learners. Her strength-based approach puts the learner first by getting them involved in the process. She masterfully covers the whole child from understanding the diagnosis to supporting them socially and emotionally. You are sure to find practical tools and strategies mapped out in all the chapters. She includes templates, methods, and techniques to ensure our 2e students find success.”

—**Richard M. Cash, Ed.D.**, educator of the gifted, author, and consultant, nRich Educational Consulting, Inc.

“Emily Kircher-Morris draws from both experience and research in putting together this strikingly practical toolkit. Packed with case examples, information, and strategies to support the many types of 2e learners, this book is a great addition to any parent or educator’s library.”

—**Edward R. Amend, Psy.D.**, clinical psychologist, The Amend Group, Lexington, KY

“*Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom* is a book that every educator needs, whether they teach special education or general education. It not only offers a structured, insightful look into learners who are so often overlooked, but also practical tools and actionable advice alongside compelling stories of and from twice-exceptional students. These stories, along with Kircher-Morris’ professional and personal understanding of the topic, bring the subject to life in a compassionate and relatable way. As a 2e learner myself who was never identified as a child, I was brought to tears by seeing myself reflected in the pages—and knowing that educators now have a resource to understand and support students like me.”

—**Amanda Morin**, Associate Director of Thought Leadership & Expertise, Understood, and author of *The Everything Parent’s Guide to Special Education*

“Emily Kircher-Morris has crafted an invaluable resource, full of insights, strategies, tools, and resources that will guide every 2e advocate in supporting our twice-exceptional learners. Her poignant student stories remind us to look beneath their ‘masks of disability’ and ‘masks of giftedness’ in order to recognize and serve their unique needs—both academic and social-emotional. I just wish this practical guidebook had been available when I was coordinating gifted education, because it goes a long way toward normalizing neurodiversity. And all of us can benefit from her words of wisdom: ‘Try. Tweak. Transform.’”

—**Deb Douglas, M.S.**, director, GT Carpe Diem Consulting, and author of *The Power of Self-Advocacy for Gifted Learners* and coeditor of *Empowering Underrepresented Gifted Students*

“*Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom* is a must-have resource for parents and educators. Filled with both information about twice-exceptional students and strategies to address multiple exceptionalities, this resource provides educators with specific ways to support diverse learners immediately. Armed with this resource, educators will be in a much better position to meet the needs of all gifted children, from academic to social-emotional needs and beyond.”

—**Christine Fonseca**, licensed educational psychologist, consultant, and author of *Emotional Intensity in Gifted Students*

“As someone who received a formal diagnosis of ADHD at thirty-seven years old, thirty years after being identified as a gifted and talented student in Brooklyn, NY, I am deeply grateful for Emily’s efforts to shine a light on how to serve students like me who think a bit differently. By focusing on ‘progress, not perfection,’ she has created a practical, yet powerful way to bring new partners into this mission and push the rest of us to deepen our understanding of the challenges and benefits of twice-exceptionality and to recognize the boundless untapped potential in students who are told they are defective because their brilliance diverges from the norm.”

—**Colin Seale**, Founder and CEO of thinkLaw and author of *Thinking Like a Lawyer: A Framework for Teaching Critical Thinking to All Students*

TEACHING

Twice-Exceptional

LEARNERS

in Today's
Classroom

Emily Kircher-Morris, M.A., M.Ed., LPC

free spirit
PUBLISHING®



Copyright © 2021 Emily Kircher-Morris

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Unless otherwise noted, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without express written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations or critical reviews. For more information, go to freespirit.com/permissions.

Free Spirit, Free Spirit Publishing, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Teacher Created Materials. A complete listing of our logos and trademarks is available at freespirit.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kircher-Morris, Emily, author.

Title: Teaching twice-exceptional learners in today's classroom / Emily Kircher-Morris.

Description: Minneapolis : Free Spirit Publishing, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020008208 (print) | LCCN 2020008209 (ebook) | ISBN 9781631984853 (paperback)

| ISBN 9781631984860 (pdf) | ISBN 9781631984877 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Gifted children—Education. | Children with mental disabilities—Education.

Classification: LCC LC3993 .K575 2021 (print) | LCC LC3993 (ebook) | DDC 371.95—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020008208>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020008209>

Free Spirit Publishing does not have control over or assume responsibility for author or third-party websites and their content. At the time of this book's publication, all facts and figures cited within are the most current available. All telephone numbers, addresses, and website URLs are accurate and active; all publications, organizations, websites, and other resources exist as described in this book; and all have been verified as of December 2020. If you find an error or believe that a resource listed here is not as described, please contact Free Spirit Publishing.

Permission is granted to reproduce the pages included in the List of Reproducible Pages (page xi) or in the digital content that goes with this book for individual, classroom, and small group use only. Other photocopying or reproduction of these materials is strictly forbidden. For licensing and permissions information, contact the publisher.

Edited by Christine Zuchora-Walske

Cover and interior design by Emily Dyer

Free Spirit Publishing

An imprint of Teacher Created Materials

9850 51st Avenue North, Suite 100

Minneapolis, MN 55442

(612) 338-2068

help4kids@freespirit.com

freespirit.com

DEDICATION

For Dave.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to thank for their support over the years that has culminated in this book.

The journey to write this book began while I was in elementary school and my mom, Pauline Gouvin, was by my side through it all—advocating for me, encouraging me, and helping me find my homework.

My dad, Allen Kircher, showed me—among many other things—the benefit of keeping a “warehouse full of useless information” in one’s brain.

Several teachers understood me—a quirky, impulsive, socially awkward kid—and never shamed me for being myself, especially Tracy Frauen, Linda Brakensiek, Nancy Black, John Guittar, Mike Hartman, and Mary Gismegian.

The Free Spirit Publishing team, including Judy Galbraith, Kyra Ostendorf, Meg Bratsch, Christine Zuchora-Walske, Amanda Shofner, and the rest of the behind-the-scenes crew guided me through this process and patiently answered all of my questions.

Jocelyn Murphy offered her support and assistance with some early stages of this project.

My colleagues at Unlimited Potential Counseling and Education Center have been integral to helping the practice grow and fulfilling our vision of supporting neurodivergent kids and their families, and the board of directors and staff for the Gifted Support Network, who tirelessly advocate for the gifted and twice-exceptional kids in our area.

My amazing clients and their families give me the chance every day to join them on their journey. I’m honored to be a part of their story and have them as part of mine. This book wouldn’t exist without them.

My own 2e kids, Grayson, Maggie, and Trevor, who bring more joy to my life than I’d ever thought possible and let me learn through firsthand experience what the parents of my clients are going through.

My husband, Dave Morris, constantly pushes me beyond my comfort zone and provides unending encouragement and support. He is the backbone of our family and my best friend. I love you, Dave.

Contents

List of Figures	ix
Digital Content	x
List of Reproducible Pages	x
Foreword by Jim Delisle.....	xi
Introduction	1
Why I Wrote This Book.....	2
Progress, Not Perfection.....	3
About This Book.....	4
How to Use This Book.....	6

PART 1 **Supporting All Twice-Exceptional Learners 7**

Chapter 1 Understanding Twice-Exceptional Learners.....	8
Recognizing 2e Learners.....	10
Underserved 2e Learners.....	13
Services and Accommodations for 2e Learners.....	16
Key Points.....	27
Chapter 2 Designing Strength-Based Instruction for Twice-Exceptional Learners	34
Meeting the Gifted Needs of the 2e Learner.....	34
The Basics of Differentiation for 2e Students.....	36
Strength-Based Instruction for 2e Learners.....	37
Addressing Areas of Difficulty.....	47
Strength-Based Lesson Planning.....	49
Key Points.....	51
Chapter 3 Social and Emotional Needs of Twice-Exceptional Learners	53
The Self-Concept of 2e Learners.....	53
Disclosing Diagnosis to Students.....	56
Perfectionism.....	60
Accommodating or Enabling?.....	65
Key Points.....	67

Chapter 4 Motivating Twice-Exceptional Learners	73
What Is Motivation?.....	74
Theories of Motivation.....	75
Self-Actualization and Motivation.....	85
Praise, Rewards, and Punishments	87
What’s My Motivation?	90
Key Points.....	90
Chapter 5 Goal-Setting for Twice-Exceptional Learners	99
Effective IEP Goals for 2e Learners	100
Student-Led Microgoals	101
Key Points.....	110
Chapter 6 Executive Functioning	112
Executive Function Skills	113
Coaching Students with Executive Functioning Struggles.....	115
Goal-Setting to Build Executive Function Skills	117
Key Points.....	119

Part 2 **Interventions for Twice-Exceptional Learners 127**

Chapter 7 Academic Diagnoses: Specific Learning Disabilities	128
Identifying Gifted Students with Specific Learning Disabilities	128
Implementing Special Education Services	135
Specific Learning Disability in Reading.....	136
Specific Learning Disability in Writing.....	141
Specific Learning Disability in Math.....	143
Social and Emotional Needs of GLD Students.....	144
Key Points.....	145
Chapter 8 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).....	147
What Is ADHD?.....	147
Identifying Students with ADHD.....	148
Reframing ADHD as a Strength	150
Social and Emotional Considerations for Gifted Students with ADHD	150
Accommodations and Modifications for Gifted Students with ADHD	154
Key Points.....	157

Chapter 9 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	160
Identifying ASD in Gifted Learners.....	160
Understanding Common Struggles for Autistic Gifted Students.....	166
Social and Emotional Considerations for Autistic Gifted Learners	171
Key Points.....	174
Chapter 10 Processing Difficulties	182
Central Auditory Processing Disorder.....	182
Visual Processing Disorder.....	184
Sensory Processing Disorder	186
Impact of Processing Difficulties on Gifted Learners.....	188
Key Points.....	189
Chapter 11 Anxiety and Related Disorders.....	191
Emotional and Behavioral Diagnoses	191
Anxiety-Based Diagnoses.....	192
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	193
Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia).....	195
Other Anxiety-Based Disorders	197
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.....	199
Social and Emotional Considerations for Gifted Students with Anxiety Disorders.....	200
Key Points.....	204
Chapter 12 Depression and Other Mood Disorders.....	207
Major Depressive Disorder	208
Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder and Bipolar Disorder	211
Social and Emotional Considerations for Gifted Students with Mood Disorders	212
Key Points.....	216
Chapter 13 The Neurodiverse Classroom	219
Normalizing Neurodiversity	219
Teaching Students About Neurodiversity.....	220
Self-Advocacy for 2e Learners	220
Your Classroom Isn't an Island	221
Try. Tweak. Transform.....	222
References and Resources.....	223
Index.....	228
About the Author	235

List of Figures

Figure 1-1	Who Should Gifted Programs Serve?.....	9
Figure 1-2	2e Commonalities.....	12
Figure 1-3	IEP Versus 504.....	17
Figure 1-4	Sample Paired Student Data Observation.....	21
Figure 1-5	Accommodation Types and Modification Examples.....	26
Figure 2-1	Enrichment, Acceleration, and Placement Options for 2e Learners.....	34
Figure 2-2	Examples of Upward Differentiation.....	37
Figure 2-3	Mind Mapping.....	43
Figure 2-4	Remedial and Supportive Service Options for 2e Learners.....	47
Figure 2-5	Sample Strength-Based Lesson Planning Templates.....	50
Figure 3-1	Validating Student Emotions.....	56
Figure 3-2	Fear of Failure Versus Fear of Success.....	64
Figure 3-3	Development of Learned Helplessness.....	66
Figure 4-1	Renzulli’s Three-Ring Model of Giftedness.....	74
Figure 4-2	Theories of Motivation.....	76
Figure 4-3	Performance Versus Mastery Goals.....	76
Figure 4-4	Internal Versus External Attribution.....	78
Figure 4-5	Extrinsic to Intrinsic Motivation Continuum.....	80
Figure 4-6	Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Self-Determination Theory.....	86
Figure 5-1	Hierarchy of Goals.....	102
Figure 5-2	The Metacognitive Cycle.....	103
Figure 5-3	My Microgoal Sample.....	107
Figure 6-1	Executive Function Skills.....	113
Figure 6-2	Sample Self-Monitoring Strategies to Build Executive Function Skills.....	117
Figure 6-3	Sample Goal Tracking Sheet for Emotional Self-Regulation.....	118
Figure 6-4	Sample Goal Tracking Sheet for Response Inhibition.....	118
Figure 6-5	Sample Goal Tracking Sheet for Task Initiation.....	118
Figure 7-1	Distribution of Cognitive Ability Scores.....	131
Figure 7-2	Sample Learning Profiles for SLD Identification.....	132
Figure 7-3	Montgomery County Public Schools GLD Identification Mode.....	133
Figure 7-4	Sample Screening and Evaluation Process for Identifying GLD Students.....	135
Figure 7-5	Phonetic Spelling of <i>School</i>	141
Figure 8-1	Handling Emotional Impulsiveness in School.....	153
Figure 10-1	VPD or Dyslexia?.....	185
Figure 12-1	Reframing Statements.....	213

Digital Content

See page 235 for instructions for downloading digital versions of these forms.

List of Reproducible Pages

Checklist for Recognizing Twice-Exceptional Children	28
Paired Student Data Observation	32
Accommodations Needs Screener	33
Strength-Based Lesson Planning Template	52
Asking for Help (Grades 4 and Up)	68
Asking for Help (Grades K to 3)	71
Types of Motivation (Grades 5 and Up)	92
Types of Motivation (Grades 1 to 4)	93
Motivation Scenarios (Grades 5 and Up)	94
Motivation Scenarios (Grades 1 to 4)	95
Motivation Evaluation (Grades 5 and Up)	97
Motivation Evaluation (Grades 1 to 4)	98
My Microgoal	111
Accommodations and Modifications for Executive Dysfunction	120
Executive Functioning Self-Assessment Tool (Grades 4 and Up)	122
Executive Functioning Self-Assessment Tool (Grades 1 to 3)	124
Accommodations and Modifications for Specific Learning Disabilities	146
Gifted, 2e, or ADHD?	158
Accommodations and Modifications for ADHD	159
Gifted, 2e, or ASD?	175
Accommodations and Modifications for ASD	177
Emotion Wheel (All Ages)	178
Improvisation and Role Play (Grades 2 and Up)	179
Two Truths (Grades 4 to 8)	180
What Are They Thinking? (Grades 1 to 3)	181
Accommodations and Modifications for Auditory, Visual, and Sensory Processing Disorders	190
Gifted, 2e, or Anxiety?	205
Accommodations and Modifications for Gifted Students with Anxiety	206
Gifted, 2e, or Mood Disorder?	217
Accommodations and Modifications for Gifted Students with Mood Disorders	218



Foreword

by Jim Delisle, Ph.D.

Distinguished Professor of Education Emeritus, Kent State University

How many times in your life have you said something like this? “If I knew *then* what I know *now*, I would have been a more effective teacher (or counselor, parent, or coach).” We can’t travel back in time to erase our mistakes or repair any unintended damage we caused while we were learning the ropes. But we can take comfort in knowing that the twice-exceptional (2e) kids and adults we meet along life’s path now will be better served, thanks to the wisdom and guidance offered by Emily Kircher-Morris in her groundbreaking book *Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom*. Indeed, this is a resource that is as useful for veteran educators like me as it is for anyone just starting out in a helping profession like teaching or counseling.

What I found most impressive about this book is the vast set of experiences the author brings into her writing. As Kircher-Morris explains and addresses a cascade of possible 2e conditions—including autism, ADHD, anxiety, depression, dyslexia, and more—she weaves a tapestry of powerful and respectful suggestions for both identifying these exceptionalities and addressing them in a classroom setting. Her frequent use of scenarios involving actual students or clients she has served brings into clear focus what it is like for gifted neurodiverse children and teens. As I read these vignettes, they reminded me of kids I’ve taught or counseled in my decades of work with gifted students, both neurodiverse and neurotypical. Kircher-Morris has done 2e kids, their parents, and their teachers a great service by so carefully explaining how to help them and by never forgetting that the most effective interventions begin with building a relationship based on mutual trust and respect.

In books like this, it is easy for authors to get so far into the weeds and the jargon that they lose focus on the child. That does not occur in *Teaching Twice-Exceptional Learners in Today’s Classroom*. Kircher-Morris writes from a vantage point of practicality and experience. Here are just a few nuggets of wisdom she offers:

- When neurodiverse gifted students achieve at or near grade level, that is not good enough.
- Perfectionism is the denial of any vulnerability.
- Autistic students cannot be bribed out of their neurological wiring.
- If you try to convince students to set goals you think are important without their buy-in, you take away their autonomy.

- A gifted child with a learning disability is a student in the deep end of the pool who doesn't know how to swim.
- It's easier to fight the monster under your bed when you turn on the light.

Some of these ideas are direct quotes from the book, while others are distillations of the author's thoughts, but each of these gems—and there are many more in the book—leave the reader with a fuller understanding of and appreciation for 2e kids and those who care about them. Kircher-Morris provides hundreds of specific suggestions for making the lives of gifted neurodiverse kids more complete and satisfying. You will return to this book so often that its pages will get dog-eared and wrinkled from use, which is the sign of a very worthwhile resource.

Now . . . if only I'd had this book four decades ago.



Introduction

When I was an elementary student in the 1980s, my mother and my teacher saw two different kids. My mother, a special educator, noticed characteristics of giftedness. My teachers saw a disorganized and impulsive child with poor grades. My first-grade teacher noted that my work was always correct, but we had to dump out my desk to find it. By the time I was in third grade, my teachers routinely kept me in from recess because my work was incomplete.

At the end of second grade my mom insisted on testing, and I began participating in the district's gifted education program the next fall. Third grade was the year I learned I was bad at math. To gain entrance to the classroom, we lined up in the hallway and one by one, we quickly answered a multiplication fact flash card. Our teacher would hold up the flash card and signal with her fingers—one, two, three. If you didn't answer before she signaled three, to the end of the line you went. I was always one of the last students in the classroom.

In fifth grade, my teacher pulled me out into the hallway to have a talk. "Do you realize," she asked in her stern voice, "that you are going to fail fifth grade if you don't get your grades up?" She lobbied for me to be removed from the gifted education program because she thought I didn't deserve to participate in it based on my grades.

I'll admit I was stubborn. Every week, that fifth-grade teacher would assign us to write our spelling words five times each. I refused. I already knew how to spell the words. I'd been a finalist in the class spelling bee for several years. Not caring that I already knew how to spell the words, the teacher gave me a zero. Her strategy was unmotivating, to say the least. (Spoiler alert: I did manage to graduate from fifth grade, even without writing my spelling words five times each.)

Through all of this, my mother was my tireless educational advocate. She found a neurologist, who assessed me and diagnosed me with attention deficit disorder (now called inattentive ADHD) at a time when girls rarely received this diagnosis. But by then the damage was done. I had an ingrained sense of helplessness and poor work habits. My teachers never seemed to know what to do with me. I was a twice-exceptional (2e) learner at a time when that term didn't exist. Even gifted-certified teachers had no training on how to teach me.

Since then, I've earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education, a master's degree in curriculum and instruction with gifted certification, and a master's degree in counseling and family therapy. While working on my bachelor's degree, I took a class called Educating the Exceptional Child, which included a single chapter on educating gifted learners. That's just one chapter in four years on meeting the needs of gifted learners—with no mention of 2e learners. Even as I pursued my first master's degree with gifted certification, I still received no training on how to support 2e learners.

I've worked as a classroom teacher, a gifted education facilitator at the elementary and middle school levels, a school counselor, and a mental health counselor in private practice serving high-ability kids and teens. I'm continually amazed at how far we still must go as a community of educators in understanding, advocating for, and teaching 2e learners. But, bit by bit, more educators are finding inventive ways to meet these students' educational needs. Special education and gifted education teachers are collaborating to understand the intersection of giftedness and disability. Classroom teachers are beginning to advocate for accommodations and services for their students who attend both gifted and special education classes. And 2e learners are embracing their unique learning characteristics. We're on the right path, even if the path is still a long one.

Gifted learners in general are statistical outliers; 2e learners are even less common. Their additional layers of neurodiversity further complicate their education. Twice-exceptional learners face challenges for which there is no one-size-fits-all solution. These children deserve to be treated individually and to identify what works for them. When educators, parents, and learners collaborate to find what works, we often discover ways to meet not only academic needs, but also social and emotional needs.

Why I Wrote This Book

The contrasting—and sometimes conflicting or confusing—qualities of 2e students have kept us in the shadows for a long time. We've been misunderstood, disciplined, unchallenged, and left behind. We've been called lazy and unmotivated, knowing in our hearts and minds that we aren't but not understanding why we can't reach this potential everyone keeps telling us we have.

Growing up as a 2e learner led me to the field of education. I became an educator to right the wrongs I experienced as a gifted student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Working as an elementary and middle school gifted education teacher, and later as a school counselor, I saw firsthand the struggles 2e students face with inconsistent support. I currently work as a mental health counselor for people who are gifted and 2e, which allows me to support them and advocate for their needs in school. I bring my experience from the office home as I raise my own 2e children. My passion has led me to lift my voice about the needs of 2e kids in other ways too, such as through my podcast, *The Neurodiversity Podcast* (formerly called *Mind Matters*), and this book.

I've written this book to help educators, administrators, and counselors understand learners who are gifted and have a diagnosis that affects their ability to learn. To understand these students, we must look behind the mask of disability that is hiding their giftedness—or the mask of giftedness that is hiding their struggles. We need to recognize how the social and emotional needs of being gifted intersect with the implications of being labeled a troublemaker or an underachiever. Supporting 2e students from a strength-based model allows them to thrive.

My hope is that this book will help bridge the gaps among gifted education, general education, and special education classrooms by providing tools to support 2e learners in each environment where they may find themselves. Students who are gifted might also need special education services or accommodations through a Section 504 plan. Kids

with an individualized education program (IEP) may also need the challenge of a gifted program. Tying together these needs and serving the whole child can provide a safety net for 2e kids so they don't fall through the cracks in our education system. A holistic, strength-based approach can help them succeed beyond their elementary and secondary academic careers.

Progress, Not Perfection

Neurodiversity is a broad concept, and gifted kids may experience many manifestations of twice-exceptionality. We're going to cover a lot of ground in this book, and it may seem overwhelming at first. Don't worry! These are ideas, strategies, and knowledge that I've built over almost two decades of work with gifted and 2e learners in both the classroom and counseling office—and I continue to learn new things every day.

My first year teaching, I taught in a third-grade general education classroom. One student in my class was quiet, smart, and quirky, and he loved to talk to anyone and everyone about his passion for motorcycles. One day, the school counselor and I were discussing some of the kids in my class, and his name came up. She looked at me and said, "You know, I think he fits the description of this diagnosis I just learned about at a conference: Asperger's." (For more information on Asperger's syndrome, see chapter 9.) I'd never heard of this diagnosis. This wasn't that long ago. I earned my master's degree in education with gifted certification a few years after that first year of teaching, and the term *twice-exceptional* never came up in that program. I entered the gifted education classroom with no formal training on 2e students.

My experience illustrates three points. First, we are on the frontier of learning about neurodiversity, and we have a long way to go. Second, understanding of twice-exceptionality is just beginning to filter beyond the gifted education classroom to other educational professionals, so a learning curve is to be expected. Third, any and every step toward supporting 2e learners is a step in the right direction. Reading this book and recognizing that gifted learners can also have a disability (and vice versa) is just such a step.

These pointers will help you begin your journey of supporting 2e kids:

- **Use students' strengths to support their struggles.** Leveraging strengths is key to building self-efficacy.
- **Bring students into the process.** Self-awareness and self-advocacy skills will help 2e students far beyond the classroom.
- **Don't be discouraged by gradual progress.** Recognize that a 2e student's struggles didn't appear overnight, and building compensatory skills takes time too.
- **Take a team approach with your colleagues.** This book is meant to bridge the gaps among the general, special, and gifted classrooms, and each of these areas (along with support educators) is vital to meeting the needs of 2e learners.

The goal is progress, not perfection. Supporting 2e kids is a marathon, not a sprint. Gradually using your new knowledge as you become more comfortable with it will help your 2e students.

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

In this book and in all my work, I'm careful to use language that is appropriate for each diagnosis based on the current terminology preferred by the population I'm describing. For example, the autistic community prefers identity-first language (*autistic student*) instead of person-first language (*student with autism*) because many within the neurodiversity movement recognize that autism is a part of who they are and not a condition they have that needs to be cured. However, I generally use person-first language to describe students with a learning disability (for example, *student with a specific learning disability* instead of *learning disabled student*). Other times, I simply use the legal language as it relates to educational law and advocacy. Language changes as our understanding of neurology and psychology changes. I ask your forgiveness if I use a term that you find unappealing and hope you will trust that at all times, my intent is to provide validation and understanding for 2e learners.

About This Book

This book is made up of two parts. Part 1, "Supporting All Twice-Exceptional Learners," looks at the needs of 2e learners and focuses on the similarities many 2e learners share. Part 2, "Interventions for Twice-Exceptional Learners," discusses 2e learners according to the various labels or diagnoses they may have, describing the specific strengths and struggles that come with each variety of exceptionality.

Chapter 1: Understanding Twice-Exceptional Learners explores our current understanding of 2e learners and how our understanding of these students has evolved over time. It discusses ways to bridge the gap between special education and gifted education programs, as well as how to build an effective interdisciplinary team to support the needs of 2e learners in gifted, general, and special education classrooms. It also provides a resource to help screen for accommodations 2e students may need.

Chapter 2: Designing Strength-Based Instruction for Twice-Exceptional Learners identifies several general characteristics shared by many 2e learners and describes how we can use a 2e learner's strengths to support their areas of difficulty. The Strength-Based Lesson Planning Template in this chapter provides a framework to combine a student's strengths with accommodations for their struggles.

Chapter 3: Social and Emotional Needs of Twice-Exceptional Learners examines the social and emotional needs of 2e learners, including how the learning environment can directly affect their well-being. We'll talk about the impact of perfectionism on 2e learners, including how it can lead to learned helplessness and feelings of shame and vulnerability.

Chapter 4: Motivating Twice-Exceptional Learners takes a deep dive into motivation and understanding how educators can help 2e learners stay motivated in environments that weren't created with their needs in mind. It explores intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through the lens of self-determination theory and discusses ideas to instill a sense of ownership of learning in 2e students.

Chapter 5: Goal-Setting for Twice-Exceptional Learners describes how to harness 2e learners' motivation through goal-setting. It offers specific strategies to help 2e learners

set goals that support their areas of struggle. It provides a framework for students to set and reach goals by following a three-step process of self-monitoring, self-assessing, and self-regulating.

Chapter 6: Executive Functioning discusses executive functioning and addresses the ways in which executive functioning struggles affect many 2e learners. It explains how to use metacognition and goal-setting to collaboratively coach students and support their executive functioning struggles.

Part 2, “Interventions for Twice-Exceptional Learners,” breaks down the needs of 2e learners into specific diagnoses within three main categories: academic, neurodevelopmental, and emotional and behavioral. Each chapter includes information about how to identify 2e learners who may have these diagnoses, specific social and emotional considerations for the population, and ways to accommodate their learning needs from a strength-based approach.

You may notice there are some diagnoses that aren’t covered in this section. For example, this book does not specifically address oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) or Tourette’s syndrome. The reasons I have not included these diagnoses (and others) are because the diagnosis is predominantly behavioral and comorbid (co-occurring) with another diagnosis included in the book, because the diagnosis is rarely given to children, or because the diagnosis doesn’t necessitate unique educational interventions for 2e learners.

Chapter 7: Academic Diagnoses: Specific Learning Disabilities looks at 2e learners who have academic diagnoses of specific learning disabilities, also called dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia. It discusses the barriers to identifying these learners and shares strategies to access special education services. We’ll consider the ways 2e students may mask their struggles or their gifts when they have these diagnoses and examine strength-based ideas to accommodate their needs in the classroom.

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 address neurodevelopmental diagnoses, including ADHD (chapter 8), autism spectrum disorder or ASD (chapter 9), and processing difficulties (chapter 10).

Chapter 8: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) looks at characteristics of 2e learners who have ADHD. It tackles the overlap between characteristics of giftedness and ADHD that can lead to a misdiagnosis or missed diagnosis in 2e learners. It provides strategies for helping 2e students with emotional regulation and rejection sensitive dysphoria, as well as a list of possible accommodations for common struggles faced by these learners.

Chapter 9: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is dedicated to autistic gifted students. It discusses the difficulty of accessing special education services for autistic gifted learners due to the IDEA definition of educational autism. The chapter defines characteristics of giftedness, autism, and both together to assist with recognizing students. It discusses lesser-known characteristics of ASD, like pathological demand avoidance and alexithymia, along with possible accommodations and modifications.

Chapter 10: Processing Difficulties addresses processing diagnoses, such as central auditory processing disorder (CAPD), visual processing disorder (VPD), and sensory processing disorder (SPD), along with manifestations in 2e learners and ideas for accommodations and modifications.

Chapter 11: Anxiety and Related Disorders looks at anxiety-based diagnoses, including generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), social anxiety disorder or social phobia, separation anxiety, selective mutism, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). It discusses the fact that anxiety is a common experience in 2e learners simply because they are 2e. It suggests ideas for accommodations and modifications for these learners.

Chapter 12: Depression and Other Mood Disorders is dedicated to gifted learners who struggle with major depressive disorder (MDD), disruptive mood dysregulation disorder (DMDD), and bipolar disorder (BD). We'll look at social and emotional considerations for these learners and talk about existential depression in gifted learners too.

Chapter 13: The Neurodiverse Classroom talks about how we can normalize neurodiversity in our schools and slowly begin both to create systemic change and to empower our 2e students to succeed.

How to Use This Book

Part 1 of this book flows best if you read the chapters in consecutive order, as the strategies therein often rely on information and terminology shared in previous chapters. You can read part 2 in the same way; however, each chapter can also stand alone as a resource for a specific student you are trying to support.

One of this book's major goals is to bridge the divides among gifted, general, and special education classrooms, so please share this resource with your school's special education department, gifted education teachers, school counselors, administrators, and professional learning communities (PLCs). Twice-exceptional learners are often right under our noses and unable to access the services they need. The more people who are on the lookout for 2e students, the more likely they are to be found and given the support they need.

Throughout the book, you'll find easy-to-use informational resources (such as the charts with various possible accommodations and modifications at the end of each chapter in part 2) and reproducible forms for you to use as you serve your 2e students (such as the Accommodations Needs Screener at the end of chapter 1 or the Strength-Based Lesson Planning Template at the end of chapter 2). Mark these pages and use them liberally. All the activities and tools are ones I've used in my clinical practice with 2e learners or during professional development training with teachers who serve 2e students.

You may also notice that many of the strategies shared in this book are helpful not only for 2e learners, but also for other students. While most of the strategies work to integrate higher-level thinking skills and are strength-based, built on common characteristics of gifted learners, you could easily generalize many of the strategies to students who are not officially 2e.

Twice-exceptional students have potential they deserve to realize. I hope you find this book useful as you support all the exceptional and amazing students in your classroom.

Emily Kircher-Morris

Part 1

SUPPORTING ALL Twice-Exceptional Learners

Part 1 looks at the big picture of 2e students. In this section we'll explore the legal precedent that advocates for 2e learners can use to help their students qualify for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or accommodations and modifications for a Section 504 plan, how the social and emotional needs of giftedness interact with other areas of exceptionality, and specific strategies in a strength-based model that are useful to support all 2e learners.

