

# TWICE-EXCEPTIONALITY: SIX CASE STUDIES FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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Educators and school leaders have many choices for professional learning, but case studies are one tool that can be used to examine issues faced by students, their families, and school personnel (see also Boswell & Weber, 2022; Weber et al., 2016). Professional learning, combined with other equity and excellence efforts, can shift instructional practices away from deficit-based thinking and toward asset-focused approaches to identify and serve students from diverse backgrounds (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Plucker & Peters, 2016). Therefore, it is vital for professional learning to incorporate open discussions about policy, practice, and the unintended consequences of the choices educators make in advanced education.

Students with advanced learning needs who also have learning challenges, such as learning disabilities, may be referred to as twice-exceptional. At times, schools prioritize services that address learning challenges (e.g., special education, 504) and access to gifted services or talent development may be limited for students with multiple exceptionalities (i.e., learning challenges and advanced learning needs; Reis et al., 2014). In addition, masking, when one exceptionality compensates for the other, can complicate identification for gifted and advanced academic services (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013). However, research evidence suggests using asset-based approaches for classroom instruction that focus on student strengths first and manage learning difficulties as they arise (Baum et al., 2017). The cases in this collection

explore a variety of scenarios related to twice-exceptionality.

These six case studies can be catalysts for independent reflection and start critical conversations among colleagues about identifying and serving students who are twice-exceptional. Each case includes (a) a scenario, (b) discussion questions, (c) notes, (d) topics for conversation, (e) National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2019) Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Education Programming Standards, (f) standards from the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2019), and (g) TEMPO+ resources for additional reading. These cases can be used in large-group, small-group (e.g., professional learning communities), or self-directed learning contexts. The hypothetical scenarios present a range of school settings and topics (see Table 1), so educators can choose cases relevant to their job roles or work through all of the cases to gain a broader perspective. These studies can also serve as models for educators who want to create scenarios tailored to their unique contexts. The possibilities are endless.

### Insert Table 1

Each case study provides an opportunity to dive deeply into the challenges of identifying and serving students with advanced learning needs and other exceptionalities. You can also check out the companion collection of case studies about general issues in gifted and talented education on TEMPO+. We hope this collection of cases leads to meaningful conversations and asset-based action plans.

## TEMPO+ Resources for Additional Reading

Boswell, C., & Weber, C. L. (2022, July). *Modeling the use of case studies to support productive professional learning*. TEMPO+. <https://tempo.txgifted.org/modeling-the->

use-of-case-studies-to-support-productive-professional-learning

Weber, C. L., Boswell, C., & Behrens, W. A. (2016, May). *Providing quality professional development utilizing case studies*. TEMPO+. <https://tempo.txgifted.org/providing-quality-professional-development-utilizing-case-studies>

## Open Access Case Studies

Meyer, M. S., & Guilbault, K. M. (2022). *Case profiles in gifted education and talent development*. [https://osf.io/h56pg/?view\\_only=94e18866610e4d86ab826cef749575e6](https://osf.io/h56pg/?view_only=94e18866610e4d86ab826cef749575e6)

### Case Study 1: Identifying Academic and Motivational Factors for Elementary Students With Advanced Learning Needs

Chloe M. Thomas

#### Bryan and Mrs. Hugg

Bryan Thames is a 7-year-old boy in second grade at Farney Elementary. Farney is a diverse school located in the suburbs. He is in Mrs. Hugg's self-contained class, so she teaches Bryan all subjects. Over the years, Bryan has been described by his teachers as a well-behaved student. He is eager to please and works hard in reading and math. He has never been a behavioral concern. His mother is extremely involved as a classroom mom and has built a great relationship with Mrs. Hugg. Bryan's mom describes him as a quiet and curious child who has always loved to explore.

Bryan has never been against going to school. He has friends and interacts well with other students, his teacher, and school personnel in his day-to-day activities. He and his friends play superheroes on the playground based on his favorite comic books and cartoons.

He has drawn his own comic books in art class and frequently describes the stories of his drawings to Mrs. Hugg. It is clear he has a very active imagination and can express his thoughts verbally. He is also interested in science and can be seen observing different plants and insects at school and at home.

However, most recently his writing has not matched his speaking ability. Mrs. Hugg was not overly concerned with his writing because he came into second grade with full letter and sight word knowledge. Throughout the year, his reading and writing progress have been inconsistent. Initially, Mrs. Hugg provided books that matched his interests for guided reading. She chose books about superheroes and bugs, and even some that were formatted as graphic novels. She could tell that these books piqued his interest, but he still struggled with the work, which has affected his demeanor at school. Recently, Mrs. Hugg noticed that Bryan's 6-year-old sister walks him to class every day because he is too teary-eyed to go by himself. This was the turning point that led Mrs. Hugg to document what she has noticed and the interventions she has tried with Bryan to discuss with the school's diagnostician.

### **Mrs. Hugg's Classroom Documentation**

The following section includes excerpts from Mrs. Hugg's instructional log where she records observations about students who might need additional interventions:

**October:** During my beginning of the year assessments, Bryan knew all of his letters, more than 100 sight words, and could read at a beginning second-grade level.

Additionally, when discussing topics of interest, Bryan's spoken expressive language was articulate and detailed. More recently, I have seen a change in behavior. Bryan used to be attentive and on task during whole-group lessons and independent work. He always follows classroom rules and is respectful of others; however, I have noticed

him falling behind in our reading lessons and he is expressing frustration with math as we move into more difficult concepts.

**December:** During whole-group lessons, Bryan has started disengaging or acting out, especially during read-alouds. When I give instructions and release the class, he stays behind because he often forgets what I asked the students to do. I had a parent-teacher conference with his mother, and we were both surprised by his recent behavior. She made the choice to seek professional help from her pediatrician to see if his disengagement might be a symptom of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). However, the screening did not indicate that ADHD was an issue for Bryan. Then, I wondered if this might be a vision issue and considered that he might be falling behind because he couldn't see the books or the board. However, he could read the words he knew when I presented them in front of him, and he was able to read anchor charts on the wall throughout the class. I have noticed his difficulty writing within the lines or in a straight line. When I asked him about the lines and prompted him to write on them, he asked me, "What lines?" Our school nurse did a standard vision test, and he was able to see all the letters, but she recommended he see a specialist for more in-depth testing.

**February:** When I choose books at an appropriate instructional level for Bryan, he starts strong, but as he reads across the page, he drops words or struggles to apply sound-out strategies to new and challenging words. When I choose books at his independent level, he reads very slowly and only leaves out a few words. Some of the words he dropped in our last session were words he had automatic recognition of on a sight word card. Although his processing time for my questions is long, he is able to answer the comprehension questions I ask orally. However, he becomes frustrated when asked to write out his answers. I picked out a few first-grade reading and writing assignments to scaffold his literacy development. He has been successful in completing

these assignments, but it takes him twice as long as his peers. We are currently working on his letter placement and handwriting.

Mrs. Hugg is unsure what to do next, so she schedules a meeting with the campus gifted and talented specialist and the dyslexia teacher to see if they can share their experiences and provide some guidance. She knows Bryan has a lot of academic strengths, but she can also see he is getting discouraged. Mrs. Hugg wants to help Bryan before the school year is over.

### Discussion Questions

1. What evidence do you see that Bryan has advanced learning needs?
2. What evidence do you see that Bryan might qualify for gifted and talented services?
3. What evidence do you see that Bryan may also have another exceptionality (e.g., learning challenge, mental health concern)?
4. Beyond the ADHD and vision issues Mrs. Hugg and Bryan's mom discussed, can you think of anything else that might explain some of the behaviors Bryan is displaying in the classroom?
5. In what ways might strengths-based, asset-focused interventions be the best option for Mrs. Hugg to use with Bryan?

### Case Study Notes

**Focus:** An elementary school teacher is working with a student who has advanced learning needs and other learning challenges (i.e., exceptionalities).

***Key points:***

- Bryan was previously an enthusiastic and engaged student.
- His family is very involved in his education.
- The school has taken steps, with the consent of the parents, to investigate what might be happening.
- Bryan's behavior is something to consider, but not likely the cause of his issues.
- He has shown the ability to read simple words but has more difficulty applying decoding strategies.
- In a traditional sense, his vision is fine, but he is inexplicably missing words with which he is familiar.
- It is important to involve specialists when a school test might not rule out a situation completely.

***Potential discussion topics:***

- Commonly missed symptoms of dyslexia
- Astigmatism and the potential effects on education
- Academic stamina
- School triggered anxiety
- Behavior as a response to an underlying issue
- Involving students in discussions about their disabilities

## **NAGC Standards**

- **1.5. Cognitive, Psychosocial, and Affective Growth. Students with gifts and talents**

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demonstrate cognitive growth and psychosocial skills that support their talent development as a result of meaningful and challenging learning activities that address their unique characteristics and needs.

- 3.2. Talent Development. Students with gifts and talents demonstrate growth in social and emotional and psychosocial skills necessary for achievement in their domain(s) of talent and/or areas of interest.
- 5.1. Comprehensiveness. Students with gifts and talents demonstrate growth commensurate with their abilities in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychosocial areas as a result of comprehensive programming and services.
- 6.2. Psychosocial and Social-Emotional Development. Students with gifts and talents develop critical psychosocial skills and show social-emotional growth as a result of educators and counselors who have participated in professional learning aligned with national standards in gifted education and Standards for Professional Learning.

## Texas State Plan Standards

- Curriculum and Instruction: Districts meet the needs of gifted/talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the curriculum and instruction ordinarily provided by the school.
  - 4.5 Opportunities are provided to accelerate in areas of student strengths (19 TAC §89.3(4)).
  - 4.6 Flexible pacing is employed, allowing students to learn at the pace and level appropriate to their abilities and skills.
  - 4.8 Provisions to improve services to gifted/ talented students are included in district and campus improvement plans (TEC §§11.251- 11.253).
  - 4.9 Educators adapt and/or modify the core or standard curriculum to meet the

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needs of gifted/talented students and those with special needs such as twice-exceptional, highly gifted, and English learners.

## TEMPO+ Resources for Additional Reading

Hughes, C. E. (2016, May). *Twice-exceptional: Glass, water, air, and divergent views*. TEMPO+.

<https://tempo.txgifted.org/twice-exceptional-glass-water-air-and-divergent-views>

Van Gerven, E. (2017, August). *Preventing and overcoming underachievement in gifted primary school students*. TEMPO+.

<https://tempo.txgifted.org/preventing-and-overcoming-underachievement-in-gifted-primary-school-students>

## Case Study 2: Balancing Diverse Learner Needs and Supporting Students Who May Have Multiple Exceptionalities

Rebecca M. Wessman

### Wally Middle School

Miss Bottoms is a first-year teacher for sixth grade at Wally Middle School. She has little formal teaching experience and her undergraduate degree was in business, but Miss Bottoms does have some childcare experience. Due to corporate burnout, she has decided to explore the path of teaching. For her first year, she is teaching sixth-grade math in a large suburban public school that serves 1,000 students. She teaches four classes, and each class has roughly 20 students, with a heterogeneous mix of some who are served in general education, gifted and talented programming, special education services, and a few who are being evaluated for a range of potential services. Three students have exhibited behaviors Miss Bottoms is observing closely, such as inattentiveness and covering their ears when

sounds become too much.

Miss Bottoms attends her team planning meetings weekly and professional development for educators new to the district biweekly. During these meetings, the teachers on the team discuss students who are receiving tiered interventions and whether these students are showing increased achievement in response to the interventions and services. The teachers review upcoming content, lesson options, and ways to engage students. Across the board, Miss Bottoms has students who are meeting grade-level standards and some who are excelling beyond. As she walks around during center time and when students are working independently, she notices that three students who have been identified for gifted services are having difficulty completing tasks on their own. Instead, these students look around the room, doodle on their desks, and talk. However, when asked about their small-group work, they show evidence of advanced learning.

### **William, Jackson, and Henry**

In class, William keeps grasping his ears when things become overstimulating. He is quick to react and hums to himself when other students make loud noises. He works well beyond grade level in math but gets frustrated when he has to complete reading and writing tasks, such as word problems. Miss Bottoms is puzzled because William frequently covers his ears when she and other students are talking to him. She has not seen this behavior in a sixth grader before and wonders if he is just tuning her out or if he might have hearing difficulties.

Jackson and Henry are constantly distracted by peers, objects around the room, and loud noises. Both of these students receive gifted services in a pull-out program, but they have difficulty working with time constraints in the classroom. Miss Bottoms knows that sometimes students with advanced learning needs can become bored if the content is not challenging; however, these students frequently miss information and ask her to repeat

information and become frustrated when it's too loud in the classroom. She wonders if they just have a lot of energy, or if they might need to be evaluated for supportive services. Miss Bottoms noticed these patterns during the first week of school and now the class is approaching the end of the first 6-week grading period. Miss Bottoms is fearful that although these students show understanding during small groups, they may not show the same mastery on assessments.

### Miss Bottoms's Dilemma

Miss Bottoms has been reading about strategies to make learning more engaging, as well as ways to reapproach classroom management. She tried to change the seating chart and attempted to separate the three students. In addition, she has tried to redirect each student's focus by calling them out when they are off task and taking away rewards. Miss Bottoms thinks that these three students could be bored or unmotivated and believes that new classroom management strategies could help reengage them. She also believes that, in designing lessons that require higher level thinking skills, she can address their strengths and advanced learning needs. Miss Bottoms suspects these three students may also need support from special education or 504, but she's not exactly sure how the referral process works. As the 6-week grading period approaches, she has very little time to rework classroom procedures and lesson plans.

Miss Bottoms has already spent months planning alongside her team, but she feels strongly that she needs to adapt her classroom management techniques and how she delivers some of the math content. She knows she is missing something with these three students, but she's nervous about making big changes in the middle of the year. She has a mentor teacher, Mrs. Razzel, but has not yet spoken with her because she wants to assess the problem on her own. She wants to have a full picture of what has and has not worked before involving her

mentor. She questions her instincts. Do these students need other education services beyond their gifted pull-out program? Can a student receive services for advanced learning needs and learning challenges, such as hearing or attention? As a first-year teacher, how is she supposed to meet the needs of all these students? Miss Bottoms doesn't want to look uneducated when talking to Mrs. Razzel, but she is desperate to help these three students excel in their learning and be the best they can be in her sixth-grade math class.

### Discussion Questions

1. The three students have been identified for gifted services but show signs of other learning needs. What evidence do you see that indicates Miss Bottoms is trying to address the students' advanced learning needs?
2. Beyond advanced learning needs, how could Miss Bottoms address the students' other potential exceptionalities?
3. How could this teacher use a strengths-based approach to support these students?

### Case Study Notes

**Focus:** A new sixth-grade math teacher is trying to address a range of diverse student needs in the same classroom.

**Key points:**

- Miss Bottoms teaches in a large suburban school and has four different sixth-grade math classes.
- She has a mentor teacher for support, but she is scared to admit that she's unsure what to do for these students.

- Miss Bottoms attends professional learning community (PLC) meetings where she and her colleagues identify student needs and discuss techniques and resources.
- Miss Bottoms has three students in one class who are showing signs of advanced learning needs and possibly other exceptionalities (i.e., learning challenges or mental health concerns), but she is overwhelmed with teaching, managing behavior in the classroom, and attending the meetings and training required in her first year.
- She thinks changing her approach to classroom management and course content could help reengage these students.

*Potential discussion topics:*

- The process for identifying advanced learning needs
- The process for identifying other exceptionalities that might require school-based services
- Resources and accommodations that might help students with specific exceptionalities
- Balancing diverse needs in one classroom

## NAGC Standards

- 3.1. Curriculum Planning. Students with gifts and talents demonstrate academic growth commensurate with their abilities each school year.
- 5.8. Evaluation of Programming and Services. Students with gifts and talents have access to programming and services required for the development of their gifts and talents as a result of ongoing evaluation and program improvements.
- 6.1. Talent Development. Students identify and fully develop their talents and gifts as a result of interacting with educators who possess content pedagogical knowledge and

meet national teacher preparation standards in gifted education and the Standards for Professional Learning.

- 6.3. Equity and Inclusion. All students with gifts and talents are able to develop their abilities as a result of educators who are committed to removing barriers to access and creating inclusive gifted education communities.

## Texas State Plan Standards

- Curriculum and Instruction: Districts meet the needs of gifted/talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the curriculum and instruction ordinarily provided by the school.
  - 4.5 Opportunities are provided to accelerate in areas of student strengths (19 TAC §89.3(4)).
  - 4.6 Flexible pacing is employed, allowing students to learn at the pace and level appropriate to their abilities and skills.
  - 4.8 Provisions to improve services to gifted/ talented students are included in district and campus improvement plans (TEC §§11.251- 11.253).
  - 4.9 Educators adapt and/or modify the core or standard curriculum to meet the needs of gifted/talented students and those with special needs such as twice-exceptional, highly gifted, and English learners.
- Professional Learning: All personnel involved in the planning, creation, delivery and administration of services to gifted/talented students possess the knowledge required to develop and provide differentiated programs and services.
  - 5.3 Teachers are encouraged to obtain additional professional learning in their teaching discipline and/or in gifted/talented education.

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- 5.7 Annually, each teacher new to the district receives an orientation to the district's gifted/ talented identification processes and the district's services for gifted/talented students.

## TEMPO+ Resources for Additional Reading

Kaul, C. R., & Johnsen, S. (2019, February). *What the research says regarding twice-exceptional students*. TEMPO+. <https://tempo.txgifted.org/what-the-research-says-regarding-twice-exceptional-students>

Trepinski, T. (2014, February). *Designing learning experiences for the exceptionally squared student*. TEMPO+. <https://tempo.txgifted.org/designing-learning-experiences-for-the-exceptionally-squared-student>

## Case Study 3: Understanding Services for Students With Concussions

Emily Branson

### James

James Scott is a junior at East High School. He is one of 200 students enrolled in the only high school in this rural district. James is a star athlete; he participates in many sports at East High, but his favorite is football. He has been on the varsity team since his freshman year, and he is the starting running back. James comes from a family of athletes: His father played football in college, and his mother and older sister both hold school records in track and field. James is an excellent student and has maintained straight As throughout school. He was identified for gifted and talented services in the fifth grade. His science teacher initiated a referral because James exhibited exceptional aptitude and achievement in that course. He

has since received an accelerated curriculum in all of his science classes and gifted services for language arts, social studies, and math.

James's high school offered the PSAT to sophomores last year and he scored 1350 out of 1520. He is passionate about using his talents in the medical field after graduation. When asked about his future plans, he details his desire to blend his love of sports and his aptitude for science with a career as a physical therapist. His future goals include attending college on football and academic scholarships and majoring in kinesiology. His immediate plans include preparing for the SAT and leading his football team to the playoffs. James is well-liked by his teachers and classmates. Members of the community describe him as a well-rounded, great kid. He is currently enrolled in two dual-credit classes offered at his high school. This program partners with the local community college to allow high school juniors to earn college and high school credit hours simultaneously.

## Concussion Protocols

In late August of his junior year, James was hurt in football practice, resulting in an overnight hospital stay. His injuries included a sprained wrist and a head injury. The doctors diagnosed him with a moderate concussion due to a loss of consciousness and ongoing confusion, but he showed an overall rapid recovery. His doctors encouraged him to take the typical 3-day rest period and to limit physical and cognitive activity. James returned to school and his football coaches restricted his activity to light exercises and continually monitored his symptoms. No specialized educational meeting was held when James returned to school, and he rejoined his classes with no accommodations. James's teachers decided that because he only missed one week of school, no special instruction was needed, so he resumed his high school and dual-credit classes. James was also registered to take the SAT in October, and no plans were made to postpone the test or request accommodations.



In the weeks after James returned to school, his teachers and friends began noticing a change in James's demeanor and academic performance. He was often tired and disengaged in class. He was prone to irritability in and out of the classroom. James's grades also started slipping; he seemed to have difficulty completing his assignments on time and answering questions in class. James's forgetfulness and low grades prompted his parents to contact the school about his performance. When asked about his mood and academic issues, James brushed the issues off, saying, "It's just because I missed school. I'm still catching up." James's teachers suggested he provide the documentation from his doctor to the 504 coordinator. After some pushback from James, his parents completed the written request and worked with the school nurse and the 504 coordinator to create a support plan.

A few of his teachers believe that James may not be able to progress at the same rate as the rest of the junior class. One dual-credit instructor even suggested pulling James out of his college-level courses. Although a concussion can have long-lasting effects, James is unlikely to experience these symptoms for more than a few months. Persistent post-concussive symptoms typically subside within three months of the initial concussion. However, at this point, James's symptoms are significantly impacting his educational experience, so services should focus on helping James return to his level of academic achievement before the injury.

James's return to school was not the gradual transition recommended for students with concussions. Return-to-learn frameworks generally include phases that gradually reintroduce the student to physical activity and academic work with support.

- Phase 1: No school, full cognitive rest
- Phase 2: Part-time school attendance, accommodations
- Phase 3: Full-day attendance, accommodations
- Phase 4: Full-day attendance, meeting to evaluate the need for continued accommodations

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Potential 504 accommodations could include half-day attendance, limiting screen-time, copies of class notes or lectures, extended due dates, and reduced assignments and homework. In addition, some protocols require the student to report to the school nurse or 504 contact to monitor symptoms and measure progress. Although James's physical activity was monitored by his coaches as he returned to school, he was not gradually reintroduced to the cognitive demands of advanced coursework.

## Issues to Consider

James's parents agree he is struggling in ways he never had before the injury but are hesitant about making changes to his courses due to the impact it may have on his academic preparation for college. James was a high-achieving student in the classroom and a star athlete before his injury. They don't want anything to disrupt his ability to pursue playing college football. They are worried his concussion may impact his ability to earn an academic or football scholarship. James also worries that he will no longer be at the top of his class. East High is part of a small, rural school district, but they provide professional learning to help educators support students who are twice exceptional (i.e., advanced learning needs and one or more exceptionalities, such as other health impairments or specific learning disabilities). James and his parents need help managing his injury and preparing for a future after high school. The 504 coordinator suggested they start by rescheduling his October SAT to the spring semester.

## Discussion Questions

1. How can teachers, the 504 team, and other school personnel support James and

- his parents through this process?
2. What additional steps could have been taken to reintroduce James into school?
  3. As a professional in the school system, how could you advocate for James to stay in his advanced academic and dual-credit courses?
  4. What strengths-based interventions could you use with a student like James?

## Case Study Notes

**Focus:** A high school junior needs temporary accommodations as part of his return to learn concussion protocol.

### *Key points:*

- James is an athlete at a rural high school.
- He sustained a head injury in football practice that resulted in one week out of school and new, noticeable difficulties in advanced academic courses.
- When James initially returned to school, no meeting was held to discuss his educational plan.
- James began to exhibit tiredness, irritability, forgetfulness, and dropping grades.
- James's parents were hesitant to request support because they wanted James to stay on his trajectory toward playing college football.

### *Potential discussion topics:*

- Services provided to James before and after his concussion
- Return-to-learn concussion protocols
- Possible 504 accommodations to help students with advanced learning needs

- Supports for parents of students experiencing concussions
- School district responsibilities for student concussion protocols—Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 38.151–38.160

## NAGC Standards

- 5.3. Career Pathways. Students with gifts and talents create future career-oriented goals and identify talent development pathways to reach those goals.
- 5.6. Policies and Procedures. Students with gifts and talents participate in general and gifted education programs guided by clear policies and procedures that provide for their advanced learning needs (e.g., early entrance, acceleration, credit in lieu of enrollment).
- 6.3. Equity and Inclusion. All students with gifts and talents are able to develop their abilities as a result of educators who are committed to removing barriers to access and creating inclusive gifted education communities.
- 6.5. Ethics. All students with gifts and talents, including those who may be twice exceptional, English language learners, or who come from underrepresented populations receive equal opportunities to be identified and served in high-quality gifted programming as a result of educators who are guided by ethical practices.

## Texas State Plan Standards

- Student Assessment: Gifted/talented identification procedures and progress monitoring allow students to demonstrate and develop their diverse talents and abilities.

○ 2.4 Families and staff are informed of individual student assessment results and

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placement decisions as well as given opportunities to schedule conferences to discuss assessment data.

- Curriculum and Instruction: Districts meet the needs of gifted/talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the curriculum and instruction ordinarily provided by the school.
  - 4.7 Scheduling modifications are implemented in order to meet the identified needs of individual students.
  
- Family/Community Involvement: The district involves family and community members in services designed for gifted/talented students throughout the school year.
  - 6.2 Input from family and community representatives on gifted/talented identification and assessment procedures is invited annually.
  - 6.3 Information is shared or meetings are held annually requesting parent and community recommendations regarding students who may need gifted/talented services.

## TEMPO+ Resources for Additional Reading

Johnsen, S., Simonds, M., & Voss, M. (2019, August). *Evidence-based practices in gifted education: Acceleration, ability grouping, and universal screening*. TEMPO+.

<https://tempo.txgifted.org/evidence-based-practices-in-gifted-education-acceleration-ability-grouping-and-universal-screening>

Lim, L., & Mahendra, R. (2022, March). *Differentiation squared: Strategies for struggling gifted students*. TEMPO+. <https://tempo.txgifted.org/differentiation-squared-strategies-for-struggling-gifted-students>

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## Case Study 4: Rethinking Professional Learning

Kari Maddox

### Ridgecrest Elementary School

Emily Weber teaches second grade at a K-5 public elementary school in an urban area. Among the 500 students who attend Ridgecrest Elementary, 99% are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. This is Emily's third year of teaching and her third year at Ridgecrest.

She has two students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) in her class. One student was diagnosed with ADHD and a learning disorder. The other student has autism spectrum disorder (ASD). With the exception of courses she was required to take on exceptional children in college, Emily has little experience teaching students with disabilities. After the first month of school, Emily received a message from the school district stating that she was required to attend staff development to help her support students with IEPs because she was not a special education teacher.

Several months into the school year, Emily noticed that Charlotte, one of her students with an IEP, was struggling. Charlotte, who was recently identified for gifted services, excels academically. She is a superb storyteller, a creative writer, and expresses herself well in written language. Unfortunately, Charlotte has had difficulty making friends and getting along with her peers. She finds it difficult to understand her classmates' emotions and intentions. Emily has also noticed that Charlotte is becoming increasingly inflexible with her routine, often growing agitated when schedules change. In order to gain insight into how to help Charlotte, Emily set up a meeting with her parents and the school counselor. Emily was able to speak about Charlotte's academic strengths and social challenges while obtaining key

background information from her parents. Emily detailed Charlotte's ability to articulate her thoughts when writing and her large vocabulary, but also explained Charlotte's social difficulties at school.

Charlotte's parents reported that she and her younger sister often bicker at home; however, they attributed this to typical sibling dynamics. Emily emphasized her concerns about Charlotte's social skills in the classroom, but Charlotte's parents focused on her above-average academic achievements. Emily and the school counselor recommended that Charlotte undergo evaluation but were unable to obtain her parents' consent. Although Charlotte's parents were kind, they did not share Emily's concerns. Through independent research and consultation with her school's special education teacher, Emily employed strengths-based interventions and individualized instruction to help Charlotte succeed. She ensured the class had a predictable routine and incorporated timers to further structure independent tasks. Over the summer Emily received word that Charlotte's parents took her for evaluation by a child psychologist. Following the assessment and a holistic review of medical and school records, the doctor concluded that Charlotte has ASD.

## Emily's Problem

Emily wishes that the school district training she was required to attend had more information about autism, especially among girls. She also wishes she understood more about diagnostic criteria and other issues children on the spectrum can face. Emily believes that her school needs to adopt a multitiered system of support (MTSS). With this model, teachers can use data to guide instruction, choose appropriate interventions, and encourage parent involvement. Emily feels like the MTSS approach could have helped her in teaching and advocating for Charlotte.

Emily knows early and accurate diagnoses are key to helping children succeed in

school and life. She wants to advocate for all of her students, especially ones like Charlotte who are twice-exceptional and could have received services better suited to her advanced academic and psychosocial needs with proper identification. As part of a staff development initiative, Emily wants to petition for professional learning that will enable educators to develop a better understanding of twice-exceptionality. Ideally, she would like this training to take place in schools and classrooms, foster mentoring relationships, and provide hands-on learning with immediate feedback. Finally, Emily plans to encourage the school district to adopt a MTSS approach to interventions. She believes combining strengths-based professional learning and MTSS will ensure a systemwide approach to providing evidence-based instruction.

## Discussion Questions

1. Meeting the individual needs of all students in a classroom can be difficult. How might professional learning that provides opportunities for application and feedback support a teacher's ability to address the broad range of needs in their classrooms?
2. Emily wonders if the school administration and other teachers will understand why she feels the need to push for additional training when time is already limited. What can she do to explain the need for all teachers to receive targeted training to support students who are twice-exceptional?
3. Research shows that accurate and early diagnoses are key to setting children with disabilities on a path toward success. How can all members of a learning community (e.g., general education teachers, special education teachers, gifted specialists) collaborate to provide services for twice-exceptional students?
4. How can educators use a family systems approach to help educators collaborate



with twice-exceptional students and their families?

## Case Study Notes

**Focus:** A teacher is learning to support twice-exceptional students through evidence-based strategies for the classroom.

### *Key points:*

- Emily Weber is an enthusiastic second-grade teacher.
- She has a wide range of students with a variety of needs in her classroom that could benefit from MTSS.
- She believes professional learning should provide educators with a deeper understanding of a diverse range of learning needs and evidence-based strategies for the classroom (e.g., strengths-based interventions).
- Emily thinks evidence-based intervention training should include time to implement the interventions in the classroom and ongoing support.

### *Potential discussion topics:*

- Rethinking professional learning for inservice teachers
- Evidence-based interventions for twice-exceptional students
- Implementing MTSS
- Collaboration between teachers and disability intervention specialists
- Family-centered support for students who are twice-exceptional

## NAGC Standards

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- 1.3. Self-Understanding. Students with gifts and talents demonstrate understanding of and respect for similarities and differences between themselves and their cognitive and chronological peer groups and others in the general population.
- 6.1. Talent Development. Students identify and fully develop their talents and gifts as a result of interacting with educators who possess content pedagogical knowledge and meet national teacher preparation standards in gifted education and the Standards for Professional Learning.
- 6.3. Equity and Inclusion. All students with gifts and talents are able to develop their abilities as a result of educators who are committed to removing barriers to access and creating inclusive gifted education communities.
- 6.4. Lifelong Learning. Students develop their gifts and talents as a result of educators who are lifelong learners, participating in ongoing professional learning and continuing education opportunities.
- 6.5. Ethics. All students with gifts and talents, including those who may be twice exceptional, English language learners, or who come from underrepresented populations receive equal opportunities to be identified and served in high-quality gifted programming as a result of educators who are guided by ethical practices.

## Texas State Plan Standards

- Professional Learning: All personnel involved in the planning, creation, delivery and administration of services to gifted/talented students possess the knowledge required to develop and provide differentiated programs and services.
  - 5.3 Teachers are encouraged to obtain additional professional learning in their teaching discipline and/or in gifted/talented education.

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- 5.5 Opportunities for professional learning in the area of gifted/talented education are provided on a regular basis, and information on them is disseminated to professionals in the district.
- 5.5.1 Mentors and others who offer specialized instruction for gifted/ talented students are provided training or resources to increase their understanding of the nature and needs of these students and the district goals for the students, including the state goal for gifted/ talented students.
- 5.7 Annually, each teacher new to the district receives an orientation to the district's gifted/ talented identification processes and the district's services for gifted/talented students.

## TEMPO+ Resources for Additional Reading

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## Case Study 5: ADHD May Not Travel Alone

### Virginia Reynolds

Meg Turner has been working for 3 years as a sixth-grade English language arts and reading (ELAR) teacher at Lionville Middle School in a large urban school district. She has

approximately 145 students spread throughout six class sections, and 20 of those students have either an IEP or Section 504 accommodation. She is spread thin and is very aware of the diverse needs of her students. Her school has a strong culture of collaboration, and she has found it helpful to conference with her colleagues on curriculum and behavior management. She has learned many great strategies for modifying curriculum to meet student needs and has found a great deal of success with most of her students. However, she is struggling with how to best serve one of them.

Akio is a 12-year-old boy diagnosed with ADHD. When he was 7, his mother requested the family pediatrician test him after receiving some concerning reports from school and noticing similar behaviors at home. His first-grade teacher reported that Akio struggled to sit still, particularly during group instruction time. The teacher was concerned that this was affecting his ability to learn. He frequently interrupted others, blurted out during instruction, and talked over his friends. Although he was generally thoughtful and liked to play with others, he often grabbed toys or other supplies without asking, even when others were using them. At home, Akio would focus on preferred activities and often forget his mother had asked him to work on a chore. It was a struggle to get him to follow through on even common everyday activities he knew how to do well, like putting on his shoes, coat, or backpack. He would go to his room for socks and shoes and forget the shoes!

After his diagnosis, Akio's parents learned to use behavioral strategies to improve his task focus. Giving him one thing to work on at a time seemed to help with his follow-through. His parents also worked with the school to develop Section 504 accommodations to help him stay on task. Chunking larger assignments and giving one- or two-step directions were key accommodations for Akio. However, as he got older, the struggles to focus worsened. His parents began discussing medication to help control impulsive behaviors and increase his focus in school.

Upon entering sixth grade, Akio demonstrated strong comprehension of reading tasks

and often shared insightful comments during class discussions. His score of “masters” on state testing from fifth grade also demonstrated excellent reading comprehension. However, his writing scores are not as advanced as those Ms. Turner observed in his other subject areas. Although Akio is articulate and supports his ideas well through speaking, his written assignments appear rushed and incomplete. Putting his thoughts on paper seems to be a challenge for him. During writing instruction, Ms. Turner often has Akio tell her his ideas first, then asks him to write them down. These conferences are usually quick since Akio has many ideas about most topics. Occasionally, Akio states the topic is boring and there is nothing good to say about it. After prodding, he can usually find something he is willing to write about these topics. However, when Ms. Turner returns to see his progress near the end of class, he usually only manages a few sentences despite well-developed ideas during their individual conference.

Throughout designated independent work time, Ms. Turner often observes Akio getting distracted. Small things such as choosing formatting options on his iPad, sharpening his pencil, and digging around in his backpack for needed papers regularly delays his work. Ms. Turner has also noted Akio engaging in frequent impulsive acts: flinging paint across the room during an art project, pushing past others to the front of the line, and climbing a rickety fence to hang off a tree limb. During these times, it takes three or four different attempts to redirect him. At other times, he is extremely responsive and helpful. He loves to organize and clean things for her, although it seems to take longer than it should.

Ms. Turner spoke to Akio’s other subject matter teachers and found he excels in mathematics, receiving above-average scores on all district and state standardized tests. His math teacher, Ms. Gonzalez, stated she can rely on Akio to understand new concepts and make connections to other topics they have studied if he can stay focused long enough. She added that he is quite skilled in mathematics compared to others in his grade. In third grade, Akio was identified, on the strength of his math abilities, as a student with advanced learning

needs and has received gifted and talented services in subsequent grades. Ms. Gonzalez emphasized that Akio needs to be redirected regularly but is still usually the first one done with assignments. He does have frequent trouble keeping track of his papers and must sometimes redo assignments as a result. Ms. Gonzalez suggested Ms. Turner might find it beneficial to discuss her concerns with the district's gifted and talented coordinator for the middle schools.

Ms. Turner is stumped. At first, she believed his fidgety and distracted nature in class was keeping him from being successful in his writing tasks. However, after multiple conversations with his parents and other teachers, she is no longer sure. To help Akio be more successful in class, she must find ways to help him focus, assist him in completing writing tasks, and lessen impulsive behaviors in class. Upon reflection, she recognizes that, while it is hard for him to begin any writing task, he struggles the most with those topics he deems “boring.” She decides to discuss her concerns with the middle school gifted and talented coordinator.

## Discussion Questions

1. ADHD can manifest in diverse ways and require frequent adaptation. What curricular or behavioral strategies might Ms. Turner try to help Akio become more successful?
2. Imagine you are the district gifted and talented coordinator. How would you make sense of the information Ms. Turner shares with you? What additional information might you be interested in collecting? Explain why that information might be useful.
3. What adjustments to Akio's 504 accommodations might be helpful? Explain how those accommodations might improve Akio's success on advanced learning tasks in the classroom.
4. School-family partnerships are important in supporting students with

exceptionalities. In what ways can the school and parents jointly support Akio's behavior and academic achievement?

## Case Study Notes

**Focus:** A student with ADHD and advanced learning needs in math struggles to focus on writing tasks.

### *Key points:*

- Meg Turner has many students with diverse needs.
- Akio has ADHD and has a 504 plan.
- He struggles to put his thoughts onto paper, especially when he is not interested in the topic.
- He has been identified as a student with advanced learning needs who receives services for math and shows high potential in reading.

### *Potential discussion topics:*

- Symptoms of ADHD
- Psychosocial approaches (e.g., Cognitive Behavior Therapy, classroom behavior management strategies)
- Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)
- Antecedent and consequence-based behavior management approaches
- Self-regulation skills interventions

## NAGC Standards

- 2.2. Identification. Students with gifts and talents are identified for services that match their interests, strengths, and needs.
- 3.6. Resources. Students with gifts and talents are able to demonstrate growth commensurate with their abilities as a result of access to high-quality curricular resources.
- 5.4. Collaboration. Students with gifts and talents are able to continuously advance their talent development and achieve their learning goals through regular collaboration among families, community members, advocates, and the school.
- 6.1. Talent Development. Students identify and fully develop their talents and gifts as a result of interacting with educators who possess content pedagogical knowledge and meet national teacher preparation standards in gifted education and the Standards for Professional Learning.

## Texas State Plan Standards

- Student Assessment: Gifted/talented identification procedures and progress monitoring allow students to demonstrate and develop their diverse talents and abilities.
  - 2.4 Families and staff are informed of individual student assessment results and placement decisions as well as given opportunities to schedule conferences to discuss assessment data.
  - 2.14 Provisions for ongoing identification of students who perform or show potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment in each area of giftedness served by the district are included in board-approved policy (19 TAC §89.1(1)).

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- 2.28 A balanced examination of all assessment data collected through the district's gifted/ talented assessment process is conducted and used by the selection committee in making identification decisions.
- Service Design: A flexible system of viable service options provides a research-based learning continuum that is developed and consistently implemented throughout the district to meet the needs and reinforce the strengths and interests of gifted/talented students.
  - 3.3 Services for gifted/talented students are comprehensive, structured, sequenced, and appropriately challenging, including options in the four (4) foundation curricular areas.
- Curriculum and Instruction: Districts meet the needs of gifted/talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the curriculum and instruction ordinarily provided by the school.
  - 4.5 Opportunities are provided to accelerate in areas of student strengths (19 TAC §89.3(4)).
  - 4.9 Educators adapt and/or modify the core or standard curriculum to meet the needs of gifted/talented students and those with special needs such as twice-exceptional, highly gifted, and English learners.

## TEMPO+ Resources for Additional Reading

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## Case Study 6: Preparing Students to Advocate for Themselves in Postsecondary

### Education

Kristy Stoll

Jaden is a 16-year-old male who attends Lake High School. This rural Texas school has approximately 130 students in each grade. Jaden has been receiving special education and advanced learning services for 10 years through his public school. Kendra was the school psychologist who conducted the initial evaluation to determine Jaden's eligibility for special education under the category of autism. She has also conducted each of his reevaluations.

Throughout his academic career, Jaden has exhibited strong mathematical skills and is currently enrolled in AP Calculus. He does well on assignments and tests but requires individualized accommodations, such as extra time on tests and flexibility on due dates. Jaden can have difficulty with executive functioning and time management, so he receives twice the amount of time as other students on exams. Jaden has also struggled to communicate with his teachers, which has created some issues with coursework. Despite these challenges, Jaden typically has the highest score on each exam. Jaden's calculus teacher believes that with his accommodations, he will do very well on the AP test at the end of the year.

In Texas, the age to start transition services is 14. Kendra started working with Jaden and his family to plan for his postsecondary transition freshman year. In every meeting up to this point, Jaden's mom has indicated that it was unlikely that he would go to college. During these meetings, Jaden's mom often spoke for him. As a junior in high school now, Jaden has expressed an interest in attending college to pursue a computer science degree. His mother

has been looking at multiple universities in the state of Texas that have strong computer science programs. At his latest reevaluation, Kendra was made aware of this change and is working with Jaden's family to focus on college readiness and admissions milestones. Kendra is concerned, however, that Jaden will struggle when he becomes responsible for advocating for himself, his disability, and the accommodations that he needs.

In the past, Jaden's mom has been extremely involved in decision making for him and has expressed how she takes full responsibility for what he needs both at school and at home. Although Kendra appreciates parents who are devoted to ensuring their children's needs are met, she is worried that the family may be unaware of the shift from parental advocacy to self-advocacy that must occur in college. When a student who receives special education and related services attends college, they are solely responsible for initiating contact with the university's disability office, providing accurate documentation, and advocating for what they need to be academically successful at the collegiate level.

Kendra wants to begin meeting with Jaden and his mother to discuss the next steps and ensure Jaden will be ready to take on this responsibility, a university schedule, and other new components that postsecondary education brings. She would like to work with Jaden to contact the disability services office at each university he is considering. This may help Jaden know what services universities offer, who to contact, and the testing accommodations he might receive. Kendra believes this would help Jaden start to advocate for his needs and ensure that the university he chooses has his medical documentation and IEP. Jaden's mother does not feel the need to plan ahead because she has always been the one to make sure that he has everything that he needs. Kendra would like to meet with Jaden's mom to explain the process of advocating for accommodations at the college level and how that responsibility will shift to her son.

Kendra is conflicted. Should she continue with her plan to prepare Jaden to self-advocate for his accommodations and services at the university level? Or should she take a

step back and concede that his mother knows best?

## Discussion Questions

1. Imagine you are Kendra. Should she risk stepping on toes to adequately prepare Jaden for self-advocating at the college level, or should she defer to what his mother believes is right for him?
2. In what way(s) is it Kendra's ethical duty as a school psychologist to ensure that Jaden is prepared for postsecondary education?
3. Do you think she has succeeded in the transition process?
4. Should Kendra have started having these transition conversations earlier with Jaden? How might that have impacted the transition planning process?
5. What evidence-based self-advocacy skills and exercises should Kendra utilize when working with Jaden?
6. How else should Jaden be prepared for postsecondary education?
7. Who should have the responsibility of reaching out to universities . . . Kendra, Jaden's mom, or Jaden? Why?

## Case Study Notes

**Focus:** A school psychologist works on postsecondary transition planning with a twice-exceptional student and his mother.

### **Key points:**

- Jaden is an autistic student who receives special education services.
- He has shown an interest in postsecondary education and hopes to pursue a computer

science degree.

- He has demonstrated high ability and an intense interest in mathematics.
- Jaden’s mother is very involved in his special education services and education.
- Kendra, Jaden’s school psychologist, wants to work with Jaden to develop the self-advocacy skills he will need at the collegiate level.
- Jaden’s mother has always been the one to advocate for her son.
- Kendra is conflicted about the next steps she should take.

*Potential discussion topics:*

- Student self-advocacy
- • Special education services in postsecondary education
- Transition planning for twice-exceptional students
- Collaboration between school personnel and families

## NAGC Standards

- 1.1. Self-Understanding. Students with gifts and talents recognize their interests, strengths, and needs in cognitive, creative, social, emotional, and psychological areas.
- 1.4. Awareness of Needs. Students identify and access supplemental, outside-of-school resources that support the development of their gifts and talents (e.g., families, mentors, experts, or programs).
- 1.6. Cognitive Growth and Career Development. Students with gifts and talents identify future career goals that match their interests and strengths. Students determine resources needed to meet those goals (e.g., supplemental educational opportunities, mentors, financial support).

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- 4.1. Personal Competence. Students with gifts and talents demonstrate growth in personal competence and dispositions for exceptional academic and creative productivity. These include self-awareness, self-advocacy, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation, resilience, independence, curiosity, and risk-taking.

## Texas State Plan Standards

- Student Assessment: Gifted/talented identification procedures and progress monitoring allow students to demonstrate and develop their diverse talents and abilities.
  - 2.15 Assessment opportunities for gifted/talented identification are made available to students at least once per school year.
  - 2.15.1 Assessment opportunities for gifted/ talented identification are made available to students at least once a year at the elementary grades and once a semester at the secondary level.
- Service Design: A flexible system of viable service options provides a research-based learning continuum that is developed and consistently implemented throughout the district to meet the needs and reinforce the strengths and interests of gifted/talented students.
  - 3.1.1 Specialists and advocates for gifted/ talented students are consulted in the development of program policies and options.
  - 3.3.1 Services for gifted/talented students are comprehensive, structured, sequenced, and appropriately challenging, including options in the four (4) foundation curricular areas: arts, leadership, creativity, and career & technical education.

## TEMPO+ Resources for Additional Reading

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