1997

Meeting the needs of the learning disabled-gifted child : a problem of non-identification

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The purpose of this study was to ascertain possible solutions to remedy the pervasive problem of the failure to identify and meet the needs of learning disabled-gifted children. Using a literature review, the writer sought to determine the characteristics of learning disabled-gifted children, perceived barriers to the identification of learning disabled-gifted children, and programming approaches that would best meet the needs of these unique learners.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE LEARNING DISABLED-GIFTED CHILD: A PROBLEM OF NON-IDENTIFICATION

A Graduate Review

Submitted to the

Division of Education for the Gifted

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

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Summer 1997

Titled: Meeting the Needs of the Learning Disabled-Gifted Child: A Problem of Non-identification

This Review by: Jill R. Nooren

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education-Education of the Gifted.

July 2, 1997
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to ascertain possible solutions to remedy the pervasive problem of the failure to identify and meet the needs of learning disabled-gifted children. Using a literature review, the writer sought to determine the characteristics of learning disabled-gifted children, perceived barriers to the identification of learning disabled-gifted children, and programming approaches that would best meet the needs of these unique learners.

The literature indicates that gifted students with disabilities fail to be selected for gifted programs. Three major reasons for the lack of identification were expressed: a) many teachers are unaware of the existence of this population; b) gifted students with disabilities are rarely identified through teacher nomination; c) inappropriate identification procedures limit the potential for placement in gifted programs.

While there is growing interest in the area of the twice exceptional child, the problem of non-identification continues to prevail in our schools. However, with increased awareness through inservice, teachers may become better equipped to recognize the characteristics of learning disabled-gifted children in order to identify them for gifted programs.

There is a growing interest in identifying children for talented and gifted programs that are termed twice exceptional, dual labeled, or crossover children. Most of these children have been recognized as having learning problems, but many have not been identified as gifted. Many educators have given little or no thought to a detailed evaluation of these children and often are not sure how to evaluate and identify the child's giftedness.

Although awareness of learning disabilities and efforts to identify students for special programming have rapidly developed during the last 20 years, a very high percentage of the learning disabled population remains unidentified and underserved (Whitmore & Maker, 1985). The concept of a student being both gifted and learning disabled is difficult to accept because there is an expectation that gifted students tend to exceed the norms in all developmental areas- social, emotional, physical, and intellectual. It is expected that the gifted child will catch on fast and will not require reminders and repetition. However, the learning disabled child's academic work behavior does not evoke in the teacher the consideration of potential intellectual giftedness (Whitmore & Maker, 1985).

Typically, attention is given to the deficits the learning disabled student exhibits and, therefore, the focus is on remediating those deficits. The tendency is to emphasize the weaknesses of these

students rather than cultivate the strengths of the learning disabled-gifted student (Baum, 1989). It becomes evident from the literature that a clear understanding of the characteristics, barriers to identification, and programming approaches that will best meet the needs of the learning disabled-gifted is necessary to enhance the recognition of these students and provide them with appropriate educational opportunities and services.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this review of the literature was to ascertain possible solutions to remedy the pervasive problem of the failure to identify and meet the needs of learning disabled-gifted students.

The review was organized to seek answers to the following questions: (1) What are the characteristics of the learning disabled-gifted child? (2) What are the perceived barriers to identifying the learning disabled-gifted? (3) What approaches to programming may best meet the needs of the learning disabled-gifted child?

Methodology

I initiated an ERIC search to find current sources about learning disabled-gifted students, using the descriptors gifted and gifted

disabled so that materials would specifically address learning disabled-gifted students. Initially, all of the sources used for the purposes of the literature review were published from 1992-97. However, I found it necessary to search some sources from preceding years in order to find more extensive research published in the area of the learning disabled-gifted. I also searched the Donald O. Rod Library at the University of Northern Iowa for books which addressed the subject of learning disabled-gifted students. A third source was the bibliographies contained in various articles and books.

The research articles and books were cited throughout the literature review. Each article and book were examined for contributions that would help answer the three questions which I sought to answer in the literature review. Sources which were cited in the narrative will be found in the Reference List (p. 34). Those sources which were examined but not cited are listed under Additional Resources (p. 36).

Limitations

The lack of conclusive and decisive literature on learning disabled-gifted students was apparent as I searched through the literature. This is a relatively new area of study. The first book devoted entirely to the gifted disabled, entitled *Providing Programs*

for the Gifted Handicapped, was written by C. June Maker in 1977 (Colangelo and Davis, 1997).

A second limitation was that many of the accessed research articles and books regarding the learning disabled-gifted were published in the early 1980s and, interestingly, most of the current publications continue to cite these same authors throughout their discussions. The major researchers most often cited include Baum, Whitmore, and Maker. The reader should take into consideration that this is a field in which there have been numerous articles published during the past ten years but in which relatively little new research paradigms have been generated.

Definitions

It is important to begin this review with a relatively close examination of the definitions of learning disabilities and giftedness in order to understand better the complexities of identifying the dual labeled child. The terms learning disabled and gifted will be covered first to allow the reader to connect these definitions to the more recently defined field of the learning disabled-gifted.

learning disabled

During the 1950s and 1960s awareness of learning disabled children was heightened. Parents and professionals influenced the

development of the field of education of the learning disabled by fighting for legislation to ensure that the needs of these students were met (Whitmore & Maker, 1985).

Formal legislative recognition of learning disabilities began in 1966 with the formation of a National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children. The committee encouraged Congress to deal with the learning disabled population and recommended the following definition:

> Children with special learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or to environmental disadvantage. (Cited by Whitmore & Maker, p.184)

Increased pressure from parent organizations and professionals resulted in the Children with Specific Learning Disabilities Act of

1969. However, funds for educational services were not authorized.

When Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was passed; special education services for learning disabled children became federally mandated and funded. The Act revised the definition of a learning disability (Federal Register, 1977):

> "Specific learning disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may be manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (Federal Register, Dec. 29, 1977, p. 65083))

Definitions and research identifying learning disabled children indicate that specific areas of verbal and/or nonverbal learning are impaired, but their potential for learning is categorized as normal or

above (Humphrey, 1990). As a special educator, I am aware that learning disabled students must have an average or above average IQ in order to receive services geared toward learning disabled students. It is clearly stated in both the 1966 definition and the P.L. 94-142 definition of learning disabilities that children with mental retardation (below average intelligence) are excluded from the classification of learning disabled and services developed for learning disabled children. A student with below average intelligence would fall under the classification of mentally disabled and would be provided services developed specifically for that population. The definitions of a learning disability, then, imply that there is, in fact, the possibility that a learning disabled student also may be gifted.

gifted

Borland (1989) states that the original U.S. Office of Education definition of gifted and talent, as presented by Sydney Marland, was adopted in 1972:

> Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided

by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.

Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential in the following areas:

1. General intellectual ability
2. Specific academic aptitude
3. Creative of productive thinking
4. Leadership ability
5. Visual and performing arts
6. Psychomotor ability (p. 11)

In 1978, the U.S. Congress revised Marland's definition to read: (The gifted and talented are) ". . . children and, whenever applicable, youth who are identified at the preschool, elementary, or secondary level as possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, specific academic or leadership ability or in the performing and visual arts, and who by reason thereof require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school." (U.S. Congress, Educational Amendment of 1978 [P.L. 95-561, IX (A)])

In 1988, a newer version was written and reads:

> The term 'gifted and talented students' means children and youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities. (P.L. 100-297, Sec. 4103, Definitions)

For the learning disabled-gifted, it is important to recognize that the federal definition recognizes more than just high intellectual intelligence, it also recognizes creativity, leadership, and artistic gifts and talents.

learning disabled-gifted

This review of the literature revealed no clear definition of the learning disabled-gifted child. However, in 1994, a new definition of giftedness was developed as part of the National Excellence Report that may be broad enough to encompass the learning disabled-gifted even more:

> Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.
>
> These children and youth exhibit high performance

> capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor (p. 26).

This definition attempts to take into consideration all children and moves away from the term gifted to the term talent. Although there is no specific mention of students with disabilities, it is clear that the definition proposes a broader identification base which could include these children.

The National Excellence report gives suggestions on how to put this definition into practice. It states that schools must develop a system to identify gifted and talented students that:

> Seeks variety- looks throughout a range of disciplines for students with diverse talents;
>
> Uses many assessment measures- uses a variety of appraisals so that schools can find students in different talent areas and at different ages;
>
> Is free of bias- provides students of all backgrounds with equal access to appropriate opportunities;
>
> Is fluid- uses assessment procedures that can accommodate

students who develop at different rates and whose interests may change as they mature;

Identifies potential- discovers talents that are not readily apparent in students, as well as those that are obvious; and

Assesses motivation- takes into account the drive and passion that play a key role in accomplishment (p. 26).

These suggestions for identification procedures are more likely to enhance the inclusion of learning disabled-gifted children in gifted programs as long as teachers are made aware that such a population exists.

Summary

It is clear from the literature that meeting the needs of learning disabled-gifted students is a relatively new area of study and interest. Many of the reviewed textbooks used to educate teachers of the gifted and talented include only brief sections regarding the learning disabled-gifted which predominantly focus on work done by Baum, Whitmore, and Maker in the 1980s. In the National Excellence Report definition there is no reference to the learning disabled-gifted.

A study completed by Tallent-Runnels and Sigler in 1995 showed that little progress has been made in identifying and meeting the needs of the learning disabled-gifted. They stated that it is

difficult to identify gifted students with learning disabilities due to their wide range of abilities and disabilities. The terms gifted and learning disabled continue to be mutually exclusive of each other most of the time because few teachers or assessors are trained in identifying students who are both highly able and have specific areas of disability.

Review of the Literature

This review of the literature will focus on three major areas. First, it will examine the characteristics of the learning disabled-gifted child. Second, it will document the perceived barriers to identifying these children. Third, it will investigate programming approaches that best meet the needs of the learning disabled-gifted child.

Learning Disabled-Gifted Characteristics

Learning disabled-gifted students are those who exhibit remarkable talents or strengths in some areas and disabling weaknesses in others (Baum, 1989). Such a definition makes it difficult to provide teachers with specific criteria by which to identify children who are simultaneously learning disabled and gifted.

Although there seems to be no absolute agreement on the

characteristics of learning disabled-gifted students, several authors compiled checklists and composites which show similarities to enable teachers and assessors to identify learning disabled-gifted students. Rivera, Murdock, and Sexton (1995) cite Baum(1989), Ladner(1989), Silverman(1989), Suter & Wolf(1987), and Weil(1987) as agreeing to a number of common characteristics gifted students with learning disabilities often exhibit. One of the characteristics on which there was common agreement was that learning disabled-gifted students often generalize minor academic behaviors to feelings of overall inadequacy and can be a disruption in class. Another characteristic was that these individuals are frequently off-task, frustrate easily, and act out without thinking about the consequences. There was also general agreement that learning disabled-gifted students sometimes cannot do simple tasks, but can complete more sophisticated activities. They may have musical, artistic, and/or mechanical aptitude, an active imagination, and be able to make creative excuses to avoid difficult tasks (see Appendix A).

Fox, Brody, and Tobin (1983) pointed to the probability that the motivational and behavioral characteristics of learning disabled-gifted children often hinder the identification process. They stated that it is useful to consider how traits associated with the gifted become modified, yet retained in the learning disabled-gifted child. They included in their study a table by Tannenbaum and Baldwin

that shows how the high IQ learning disabled child may exhibit characteristics often identified with the high IQ, highly motivated child. Tannenbaum and Baldwin state that, while the child with high tested intelligence and strong motivation may be perfectionistic and have high expectations for him or herself and others, the learning disabled child with high tested intelligence may become frustrated with his or her inability to master skills and refuse to perform tasks in order to avoid failure.

A second difference cited by these researchers is the way in which the learning disabled child with high tested intelligence shows that he or she has a variety of interests and special abilities. There is a perceived difficulty in pursuing his or her interests because of process and learning difficulties. The learning disabled child's parents often report that the child has many interests at home but seems dull and uninterested in activities at school.

A third difference is that the child with high tested intelligence and strong motivation shows alertness and high levels of energy, while the learning disabled child with high tested intelligence may be viewed as hyperactive and easily distractible. The learning disabled child can become frustrated by inactivity or too much emphasis of deficient skills.

Finally, it was pointed out that the child with high tested intelligence and strong motivation possesses extraordinary critical

thinking skills, while the learning disabled child with high tested intelligence may combine ideas or express solutions that peers and teachers find bizarre. The learning disabled child with high tested intelligence may be regarded as disrespectful because of his or her tendency to question teacher's facts or conclusions (see Appendix B).

Bireley (1995) refers to the learning disabled-gifted child as a crossover child. As a part of her research, she developed a composite list of the characteristics of the crossover child and pointed out that the list contains both learning disabled and gifted characteristics. She believes that the crossover child will exhibit some of the common characteristics of giftedness. He or she will intellectually approach or reach the gifted range, have more interest and ability in pursuing broad bases thematic topics than in remembering details, exhibit creativity or problem solving ability, exhibit as sophisticated sense of humor, visualize well, show high levels of sensitivity, and have a high readiness to learn when topics are presented in a challenging manner. Bireley observes that the crossover child will also exhibit some of the characteristics associated with learning disabilities. He or she may have an uneven pattern of strengths and weakness, have written language difficulties, need remediation for skill deficits, be distractible in large groups, have difficulty with organization, and lack some social skills and common sense decision making ability (see Appendix C).

Barriers to Identification

One of the greatest barriers to the identification of learning disabled-gifted students is that they go unnoticed. They have a tendency to display average ability because the gift masks the disability and conversely, the disability masks the gift. From the literature review, it is clear that many of the researchers feel that the greatest barrier to identification for gifted children with learning disabilities is that teachers do not notice these students' giftedness and, therefore, do not nominate or select them for gifted programs (Colangelo & Davis, 1997; Davis & Rimm, 1994; Fall & Nolan, 1993; Rivera, Murdock, & Sexton, 1995; Tallent-Runnels & Sigler, 1995; Toll, 1993; Whitmore & Maker, 1985).

According to some researchers, this pervasive problem of non-nomination of gifted students with learning disabilities may be the responsibility of both regular and special education teachers because many of them are unaware that such a population even exists (Rivera, Murdock, & Sexton, 1995). Toll (1993) points out that recognizing the learning disabled-gifted child is not an easy task and that the characteristics of gifted children and the characteristics of learning disabled children should be explained to both teachers of the gifted and special education teachers. Fall and Nolan (1993)

strongly recommend that information be shared with parents and teachers so that they will know what these students "look" like. They suggest that in-service meetings be held that include information on characteristics and profiles of the gifted as well as characteristics and strengths of learning disabled students.

Whitmore and Maker (1985) suggest that the principal obstacles to identification of these students lies in the stereotypic expectations that prevail regarding expectations for the classroom behavior of gifted students. They define three categories of stereotypic expectations for gifted students that impede the discovery of giftedness in students with learning disabilities.

The first identified category is teachers expect that gifted students will exceed the norms in all developmental areas- social, emotional, physical, and intellectual. These expectations do not fit the characteristics of the learning disabled child; and, therefore, the teacher overlooks potential intellectual giftedness in the student based on academic work behavior. Reading ability also is often seen as a predictor of later academic achievement and a direct reflection of the level of intelligence. When the gifted child with learning disabilities is unresponsive to reading instruction, he or she is seen as a slow learner.

The second category is the curriculum and the instructional process used by the teacher in many classrooms. Traditional

educational practice focuses on psychomotor and perceptual modality training rather than interactive learning processes. Textbook-workbook and lecture-exercise-test modes of instruction limit the opportunities for teachers to observe students' higher levels of comprehension, analytical reasoning, and creative problem solving.

Whitmore and Maker identify as the third obstacle the teacher's very limited knowledge about individual children. This lack of knowledge is related to the stereotypic expectations and the restricted nature of curriculum and instruction used in most classrooms today.

Colangelo and Davis (1997) seem to be in agreement with these barriers to identification of the learning disabled-gifted. They describe eight significant barriers to identification:

1. Inappropriate Identification Procedures
2. Stereotypic Attitudes
3. Lack of Information on the Nature and Impact of Developmental Delays
4. Inadequate Training of Professionals
5. Lack of Program Models, Research, and Dissemination Strategies
6. Lack of Supportive Technology
7. Lack of Appropriate Career Counseling
8. Inadequate Funding (p. 518-521)

The first barrier, cited by Colangelo and Davis, indicates that learning disabled-gifted children often are not identified because inappropriate identification procedures have been used. Instruments used in the identification of non-disabled children may be inappropriate for use with children who are learning disabled-gifted.

The second barrier, stereotypic attitudes of teachers, reiterates Whitmore and Maker's concerns. Colangelo and Davis state that teachers' expectations of typical gifted children may impede the identification of special gifts in children with learning disabilities.

Gaps in information regarding the nature and impact of developmental delays associated with disabilities is the third barrier to identifying the gifted among learning disabled children. Colangelo and Davis feel that it is risky to make a diagnosis of a child too quickly when he or she is lagging behind in certain facets of development. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1977) helps safeguard decisions made about the child with disabilities by requiring a multidisciplinary team, including the parents, that shares information essential for diagnosis, educational placement, and programming.

The fourth barrier cited by Colangelo and Davis was inadequate training of professionals. Many persons working in the field are not trained to identify and educate children who are both

gifted and learning disabled. Special educators trained to teach children with disabilities may have little knowledge about characteristics of gifted children, professionals in gifted education may have little knowledge of the effects of disabilities on learning, and most regular educators have little training that addresses either disability or giftedness.

The fifth barrier, the lack of program models that have been developed and tested and the little research done in the area of learning disabled-gifted, provide little to guide educators toward appropriate interventions to be used with the learning disabled-gifted child. Without models or research to guide practice, educators have to rely on "gut feelings" and common sense.

Colangelo and Davis identify the lack of funding for needed equipment and materials for instruction to meet the needs of gifted children with disabilities as the sixth barrier to identifying learning disabled-gifted children. They point out that the use of technology for assessment and instruction in gifted education can revolutionize practice, but we must also provide educators with adequate training to use the technology resources.

The seventh barrier, the lack of appropriate career counseling is seen in historical cases of individuals with gifts and disabilities. These cases indicate that schools have done little to promote the development or their gifts or counsel them appropriately. Colangelo

and Davis observe that counselors and teachers should help learning disabled-gifted students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to actualize their full potentials.

The final barrier, inadequate funding, is a one of the most serious barriers to identifying learning disabled-gifted students. Colangelo and Davis feel that this is a problem that is difficult to solve when schools are being asked to do more for less, but society cannot afford to nurture the potential of some children while ignoring others (Colangelo and Davis, 1997).

The reviewed literature clearly indicates there are barriers to the identification of gifted students with learning disabilities. Therefore, identification procedures must be on-going and consist of multiple measures, including informal observation to ensure that gifted children with disabilities are recognized and provided with differentiated curriculum that maximizes learning opportunities (Colangelo and Davis, 1997). In addition, teachers must be made aware of the existence of this population and educated about their characteristics in order to identify them.

Programming Approaches

The child who has been identified as learning disabled-gifted will have different educational needs from those of the learning

disabled or the gifted student. The learning disabled-gifted student has gifts and talents that are often masked by their deficiencies in one or more skill areas (Fox, Brody, & Tobin, 1983; Bireley, 1995; Whitmore & Maker, 1985).

Researchers in the area of gifted education seem to have agreed on two aspects pertaining to programming for the learning disabled-gifted student. One is that it is necessary to have a collaborative, transdisciplinary team meet to determine best programming and services for the learning disabled-gifted student, and the other is that self-esteem/ self-concept of the student is extremely important when making decisions regarding this group of learners (Bireley, 1995; Pledgie, 1982; Van Tassel-Baska, 1991).

According to Pledgie (1982), educational programming for the learning disabled-gifted child cannot be delegated to one program area or group of professionals. He says that a transdisciplinary approach is needed. This should include regular teachers and special educators, as well as gifted program staff.

Van Tassel-Baska (1991) agrees that a model of collaboration among professionals with differing perspectives on a student's needs

is necessary in order to provide meaningful programs and services to these unique learners. She cites five reasons to promote a collaboration model to facilitate service to these learners:

1) Disabled gifted learners currently receive little or no "integrated" service. Where school programs exist, they tend to be fragmented with treatment for LD problems being done in isolation of treatment for giftedness.

2) The educational needs of these learners require atypical responses beyond the traditional classroom and school. Accommodation to strengths and deficit areas requires educational teaming and careful planning. The role of parents in the planning and the implementation of a program is critical.

3) Personalized education carries with it a heavy resource commitment which may be beyond the capability of most schools to provide. The use of tutors and mentors are recommended approaches to programming for these learners that require the use of extensive community resources.

4) There is little funding for gifted programs in general; therefore, the funding for specialized groups of learners must be sought beyond the limited gifted budget at local

and state levels. Collaborative delivery systems allow us to tap into broad-based resources.

5) Finally, as a field, we know very little about successful interventions for this population from either a research or practical perspective. It is necessary to consult with appropriate specialists in handicapping conditions, school psychologists, and others who are knowledgeable about these learners in ways that we are not. (p.252)

She believes that all of these factors are important to consider when developing a delivery system for disabled gifted learners based on collaboration.

The literature shows that collaboration among professionals is necessary to serve in the best manner the learning disabled-gifted child (Bireley, 1995; Colangelo & Davis, 1997; Fox, Brody, & Tobin, 1983; Van Tassel-Baska, 1991; Whitmore & Maker, 1985). This is still a relatively new area; and, as Van Tassel-Baska (1991) points out, few educational professionals are schooled in the specific area of meeting the needs of the learning disabled-gifted, and there is still no empirical evidence that proves that any one type of programming is successful in meeting the needs of these unique learners.

It is clear that collaboration among professionals is a recurring theme in the literature and is a necessary component to successful educational programming for the learning disabled-gifted student.

Once a collaborative, transdisciplinary team has been established, it is necessary to determine the type of programming that will best meet the individualized needs of the learning disabled-gifted student (Van Tassel-Baska, 1991).

Pledgie (1982) states that the learning disabled-gifted child will need an individualized educational program (IEP). He believes that the IEP should include both the student's strengths and weaknesses and should clearly specify the services to be provided and who will provide them. Services can be provided by a wide variety of professionals for the learning disabled gifted child, including the regular, special education, and gifted education staff and any other support staff that may be needed.

From the literature it appears that one of the advantages of creating a collaborative, transdisciplinary team and an IEP for the learning disabled-gifted child is that both the strengths and weaknesses of the child will be given attention. Baum (1989) says that it is important that the child's strengths be fostered, but it is just as important that the child receive remediation for weak areas. She proposes four general guidelines that can assist professionals in developing programs to meet the needs of the learning disabled-gifted: teachers should focus attention on the development of the gift, provide a nurturing environment that values individual differences, encourage compensation strategies, and encourage

awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses.

Whitmore and Maker (1985) developed a similar list of four conditions that they determined to be critical to the appropriate education of learning disabled-gifted students:

> 1) An appropriate curriculum must be provided that addresses both sets of special education needs- those related to specific intellectual giftedness and those related to specific learning disabilities.
>
> 2) The student must be skillfully guided by a well informed teacher to grow in accurate self-understanding.
>
> 3) Whenever possible, groups of similar peers should be grouped together for at least a portion of the day.
>
> 4) The LD gifted student must be provided with intentional and skillful guidance by the teacher in developing more effective strategies for coping with the personal consequences of both the intellectual giftedness and the specific learning disability. (p.201).

Bireley, Languis, and Williamson (1992) listed several important recommendations regarding programming for the learning disabled-gifted based on their study of the physiological aspect of the learning disabled-gifted condition:

> Providing remedial and compensatory strategies for LD/G children must not be terminated when reading skill is

sufficient for classroom functioning. A serious written language deficiency will continue to exist in most LD/G children. We recommend long term support for writing skills, early and intensive teaching of word processing skills, and ongoing advocacy on their behalf so that children will be allowed to use such skills for the completion of significant school assignments from an early age . . . .

In spite of large vocabularies, LD/G children may need more time to process incoming auditory verbal information. Teachers in all classrooms, but especially teachers of the gifted used to dealing with quick verbal interactions, must be cognizant of this processing lag and provide ways for such individuals to keep up. "Buddy" note takers, review of critical points, and patience in waiting for responses are but a few compensatory techniques . . .

Direct teaching of efficient learning and problem solving strategies must be taught to this group. Graphic organizers, self-talk problem solving sequences, study skills, and memory enhancers are examples of such skills . . .

Attention to issues of self-concept and self-esteem are

> critical. The discrepancies that exist in the functioning of the LD/G individual are often attributed to laziness, inattentiveness, and willfulness. It is important that specific information about this problem be shared with the child as well as with all significant adults in his/her environment. Some of the problems of this condition can be overcome, some can be contained by compensatory skills, and some must be dealt with as life-long weaknesses. Lending emotional support to the individual who is developing a coping repertoire must be considered as having equal priority with educational programming (pp. 106-107).

It is clear from the reviewed literature that a collaborative approach must be taken in order to best meet the needs of the learning disabled-gifted student. Attention must be paid to the students' strengths as well as their weaknesses. Most of these unique learners spend the majority of their time working on their deficit skill areas in isolation, and the literature shows that this is not an effective way to truly help them develop their gifts. It is important for teachers to be advocates for these students and to open themselves up to suggestions and services of others (Bireley, 1995; Fox, Brody, & Tobin, 1983; Van Tassel-Baska, 1991;

Whitmore & Maker, 1985).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The characteristics of the learning disabled-gifted child found in the literature can serve as a guide to enable teachers to recognize the indicators of giftedness in these unique learners. However, this review of the literature revealed no clear definition of the learning disabled-gifted child. Perhaps an in depth review and analysis of the definitions of both learning disabilities and giftedness is needed in order to develop a definition of the learning disabled-gifted child that will encompass most children who would fall into this category.

Educators must also be informed of the identification procedures necessary to identify learning disabled-gifted students. This review of the literature revealed that the learning disabled-gifted are often an unidentified and underserved population. Tallent-Runnels and Sigler did a study in Texas to examine the status of education for gifted students with learning disabilities. Their purpose was to determine whether such students were being identified and served in gifted programs. What Tallent-Runnels and Sigler found was that few school districts reported selecting gifted children with learning disabilities for gifted programs (Tallent-Runnels, Sigler, 1995). It is important to recognize that identification

must be an ongoing process and consist of multiple measures, including informal observation and other alternative assessments in order to make sure that learning disabled-gifted children are identified for gifted programs.

The best practices in working with individuals with gifts and disabilities should be made more readily available to professionals working directly with learning disabled-gifted children. Programming for the learning disabled-gifted learner will require a collaborative, transdisciplinary approach. It is essential that specialists in the areas of gifted education, special education, regular education, and support staff work together as a team to best meet the needs of the gifted child with learning disabilities. It cannot be assumed that strategies used before with a learning disabled-gifted student will be effective when considering options for the new student under consideration.

Strategies that have worked in the past may be a good beginning point from which the team begins discussion. The importance of the services and strategies being personalized for each student cannot be overstressed. In special education, a collaborative, transdisciplinary team gathers to discuss a student's individual education plan (IEP), and this approach also is recommended for meeting the needs of the learning disabled-gifted student. This makes collaboration even more important, since it provides at all

levels a more accurate perspective on student needs and makes it possible to facilitate the development of individually appropriate programs.

The need for further study regarding the learning disabled-gifted becomes evident through this review of the literature. There continues to be very few gifted children with disabilities identified for gifted programs and a lack of information among educators as to the existence of this population.

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Appendix A

Teacher's Checklist of Gifted/Learning Disabled Student Characteristics

This is an observable checklist. If the majority of observations are in columns three and four, refer the child for further evaluation.

Characteristics	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Generalizes minor academic failures to feelings of overall inadequacy.	1	2	3	4
Disruptive in class.	1	2	3	4
Frequently off task.	1	2	3	4
Frustrates easily.	1	2	3	4
Cannot do simple tasks, but can complete more sophisticated activities.	1	2	3	4
Has difficulty with computation, but demonstrates higher level of mathematical reasoning.	1	2	3	4
Acts out without thinking about the consequences.	1	2	3	4
Has poor social skills with peers and adults.	1	2	3	4
Does not respond well or consistently to auditory instructions/information.	1	2	3	4
Spells poorly.	1	2	3	4
Has poor handwriting.	1	2	3	4
Does well in mathematics, but				

poorly in language arts.	1	2	3	4
Does well in language arts, but poorly in mathematics.	1	2	3	4
Does not do well on timed tests.	1	2	3	4
Has musical, artistic, and/or mechanical aptitude.	1	2	3	4
Has an active imagination.	1	2	3	4
Makes creative excuses to avoid difficult tasks.	1	2	3	4
Has excellent visual memory.	1	2	3	4
Has sophisticated sense of humor.	1	2	3	4
Shows expertise in a particular area (e.g., insects, dinosaurs).	1	2	3	4

Note. From "Serving the Gifted/Learning Disabled," by D. Rivera, J. Murdock, and D. Sexton, 1995, Gifted Child Today, 18 (6), p. 36

Appendix B

Characteristics of high-IQ, highly motivated vs. high-IQ learning disabled children

The child with high tested intelligence and strong motivation.	The learning-disabled child with high tested intelligence.
Perfectionist-high expectations of self and others.	Frustrated with inability to master high priority, scholastic skills. The need to avoid failure leads to refusal to perform required task. Unhappiness over failure to live up to own expectations often leads to frustration and anger. Denies learning problem by stating that school activity is "dumb" or too easy. Deceives by doing work so sloppily that it is impossible to evaluate.
Voracious consumer of knowledge-retains extraordinary quantities of information; desires to explore, to know, to discover.	Bored with regular curriculum, particularly if it is textbook and workbook oriented. Has large knowledge base, which may have been acquired through intact sensory processes, but often suffers from "verbal diarrhea" to compensate for perceived failures in various school subjects. Bores classmates with long-winded or pompous disquisitions that reveal more information than anybody wants to know. May feel comfortable in revealing solid knowledge only in the safety of a one-to one

	relationship with an adult. May divert conversation to more complex and challenging subjects. Reacts obstinately to criticism or doubt.
Possesses a variety of interests and special abilities.	May also have a wide variety of interests, but is handicapped in pursuing them because of process and learning difficulties. Parents often report many interests at home, but child seems dull, uninterested in activities at school. Is capable of self-entertainment for long periods of time when there is no required work to do.
Language skills are highly developed.	May use verbal skills to avoid or or mask specific language and behavior disorders. May not use a large vocabulary when speaking, but can explain meaning of words far beyond age expectancy. Enjoys playing with words and their diverse meanings, even at inappropriate times and in inappropriate ways.
Shows alertness, high energy level and accelerated pace of thinking.	May be viewed as hyperactive because of need to be actively involved. Frustrated by inactivity or too much emphasis on deficient skills in the classroom Impatient during social studies and science lessons that are

	textbook oriented. Asks thought-provoking questions that may be misinterpreted; may also try to divert class discussions to current events. Easily distracted by activities and conversations going on in other part of the classroom Has difficulty focusing attention on written tasks or workbook pages
Able to generate creative ideas about new problems and innovative solutions to old ones	May be performing a task in a new or creative way, but seems not to be following directions Dislikes rote and drill exercises, such as reciting arithmetic facts
Is unusually sensitive to and the feelings of self and others	Sensitive to criticism by others, highly critical of self and others, including teachers Can understand and express concern about the feelings of others even while engaging in anti-social behavior Able to size up situations and utilize them to own advantage; may become skillful at manipulating others, including parents and teachers Is sensitive to inconsistencies in teacher's disciplinary procedures and will complain about such unfairness
Possesses a keen sense sense of humor	May use a sense of humor to clown and divert attention from failure in school activities

	May use humor to demean or make fun of other students
Possesses extraordinary critical thinking skills and sees unusual relationships in objects, events, and ideas	May combine ideas or express solutions that peers and teachers find bizarre May be regarded as disrespectful because of tendency to question teacher's facts or conclusions

Note. From Learning-Disabled Gifted Children: Identification and Programming (pp. 26-28), by L. Fox, L. Brody, and D. Tobin, 1983, Baltimore: University Park Press.

Appendix C

Characteristics of the Crossover Child

Like other gifted children, the typical crossover child will:

*Intellectually approach or reach the gifted range (in this group, 120 IQ or above Full Scale; 130 IQ or above in the strongest factor, Verbal Comprehension or Perceptual Organization using Wechsler scores.

*Have more interest and ability in pursuing broad based, thematic topics than in remembering and dealing with details. "...the harder the task, the better they do; it's the easy work they can't master"(Silverman, 1989,p.39)

*Be somewhat more of an intuitive "dreamer" than a practically oriented thinker; creativity or problem solving ability may be exhibited in a specific area of interest.

*Exhibit a sophisticated sense of humor.

*Visualize well and do well in areas requiring this ability (e.g. mathematics, especially geometry; art).

*Be highly sensitive and base decisions on personal feeling and

human need rather than on logic as a young child, but may become more logical in adolescence.

*Have a high "readiness to learn" and great interest in learning when topics are presented in a challenging manner.

Like children of average ability with learning disabilities, the typical crossover child will:

*Have an uneven intellectual pattern on the Wechsler intelligence tests with verbal comprehension and perceptual organization scores superior to those tapping attentional or sequencing abilities.

*Have an uneven academic pattern with strengths most likely in mathematics or content areas and weaknesses in the language art areas-especially written language-but variations exist.

*Have written language difficulties including poor handwriting, poor mechanics, and difficulty in organizing content.

*Need remediation for skill deficits (but will respond better to teaching in context than to isolated skill building).

*Be distractible in large groups and have difficulty in completing

work because of that distractibility.

*Have difficulty in organizing time and materials, often resulting in forgetting or incompletion of homework or in need of excessive time for completion.

*Need medical monitoring because he or she may benefit from medication and/or behavioral intervention for ADHD.

*Need more time to process language and respond than would be expected of someone with high intellectual capabilities.

*Lack some social skills and common sense decision making ability.

*Sometimes exhibit visual or auditory perceptual deficits or unusual sensitivity to light.

*Be less successful when confronted with input from multiple sources or with tasks that require the integration of multiple skills.

Note. From Crossover Children: A Sourcebook for Helping Children Who are Gifted and Learning Disabled (pp. 5-6), by M. Bireley, 1995, Reston, Va. : Council for Exceptional Children.