GIFTED STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES: A CURRENT REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Students who are both gifted, and learning disabled, face challenges that most of their peers do not. Their disabilities and their strengths are often overlooked. Teachers may only focus on a student's weakness and fail to see high intelligence, or the giftedness may mask the disability and cause the child to appear average. Even when they are correctly identified, gifted and learning disabled students' social, emotional, and intellectual needs are often overlooked in the effort to remediate their disability. These students must be correctly identified as being gifted and having a learning disability in order for their needs to be adequately met. Effective programming for gifted and learning disabled students also includes social and emotional support, as well as interventions which focus on strengths, rather than weaknesses. These students will meet their potential only when their needs are appropriately met.

Keywords: *gifted students, learning disabled*

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This paper reviewed literature which addressed the characteristics and needs of students who are gifted and learning disabled. A discussion of the academic needs as well as the social and emotional needs of these students was included. Gifted and learning disabled students' social, emotional and intellectual needs are often overlooked in the effort to remediate their disability. Identification of these students and the challenges associated with it were examined. Often, a student's giftedness, or their learning disability, or both, remain undiagnosed, and these students do not receive appropriate interventions. Even when they are identified, it is common for the learning disability to be the only need that is acknowledged. These students must be correctly identified, both for their giftedness and for their learning disability, in order for their unique needs to be adequately met. Effective programming for gifted and learning disabled students includes social and emotional support, and interventions which focus on strengths rather than weaknesses. Only when their needs are appropriately met will these students meet their potential.

CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS

Children who are highly intelligent, but who also have learning disabilities are different than both their gifted peers and their learning disabled peers. The asynchronous development typical of gifted students is often exaggerated in the presence of a learning disability, leading to frustration and stress. It is important for teachers and parents to be able to understand the unique characteristics and needs of these students.

In their examination of the dual characteristics of gifted students with learning disabilities, Baum, Cooper, and Neu (2001) reported that students rarely reached their academic potential because the learning disability rather than the strength was addressed. They found that the characteristic behaviors of gifted children, including high interest, high ability, and creativity were ignored while the learning disability was remediated. Failing to address all the characteristics of these students led to low self-confidence, behavior problems, and feelings of frustration (Baum et al., 2001).

Barber and Mueller (2011) studied the characteristics and needs of gifted students with learning disabilities. They found that these students face challenges not only in learning, but with other skills, as well. Gifted and learning disabled students often lack the ability to understand social cues and effectively participate in classroom activities. This lack of social ability is a result of the asynchronous development typical of highly intelligent youth. Their cognitive function has developed more quickly than their social and emotional capabilities, putting them at a higher risk for peer rejection, another cause of poor self-concept (Barber & Mueller, 2011).

Barber and Mueller (2011) also discussed how pressure to achieve, which is typical of gifted students, may be even worse for gifted students with learning abilities. For instance, frustration often results from high expectations paired with the inability to do something because of a disability, causing stress both at home and at school. These students often display characteristics of underachieving and learning disabled students such as disruptive classroom behaviors and poor social skills, rather than the high academic achievement shown by other gifted children. The authors suggested that this poor classroom behavior might be, in part, a result of not being able to find peers in any classroom setting. These students are unlike both learning disabled and gifted students. Not only do they suffer from social difficulty, but their giftedness results in a heightened awareness of being different. This study also found that the self-perceptions of these students were more similar to students with learning disabilities than to other gifted children (Barber and Mueller, 2011).

King (2005) addressed reasons why gifted and learning disabled students have social and emotional needs which are different from any of their peer groups. They experience a continuous struggle between academic difficulties and intellectual strengths. In fact, they face even more difficulties than their gifted peers. They have the heightened emotional sensitivity common in gifted children, as well as the pressure from others and themselves to achieve. These pressures, combined with a learning disability than can impair that achievement, leads to

frustration. The battle between academic success and intellectual ability can make school a difficult place for gifted students with learning disabilities (King, 2005).

In addition to frustrations from the inability to achieve academic goals, gifted students with learning disabilities struggle to fit in with peers. King (2005) suggested that for gifted children, high intelligence can act as a buffer in difficult social situations, but gifted students with learning disabilities may not be able to protect themselves from social problems in the same way. The resulting social isolation from both gifted peers and average peers can cause lowered self-concept and emotional stress. The disappointment they feel when they see that their academic goals are not being met can exacerbate this problem. Therefore, addressing the learning difficulty alone is not sufficient in helping these students succeed. Focusing on weakness alone simply makes this emotional problem worse. Instead, focusing on a student's strengths can boost their self-confidence, leading to more successes. Because of these distinctive problems, addressing the social and emotional needs of these students is just as important as addressing their academic needs (King, 2005).

Wellisch and Brown (2012) considered the social, emotional, and motivational problems which exist in some students who are gifted and learning disabled. They suggest that attachment difficulties and maternal depression might be the cause of these problems, leading to academic underachievement. It is critical for schools to recognize and address the needs of gifted and learning disabled students. Correct identification and programming for these students leads to success, which in turn helps with adjustment, emotional problems, and self-concept (Wellisch & Brown, 2012).

Assouline, Nicpon, and Dockery (2012) discuss gifted children with autism spectrum disorders. Autism spectrum disorders are one of the most common learning disabilities in gifted children. The needs of these children are distinctly different from either gifted students, or students with learning disabilities. For these students, the assumption that high ability predicts achievement is not true. The conventional methods of measuring achievement, such as RtI, and IQ and achievement tests, may not accurately measure the strengths and learning potential of gifted children with autism spectrum disorders. In addition, Assouline, et al. explained how the unique social challenges faced by individuals with autism spectrum disorders combined with the higher cognitive ability of the gifted challenge these students even more than typical social abilities of this disability. They found that correctly identifying both the learning disability and the giftedness were essential in providing successful interventions. Addressing the learning disability alone was not effective in helping either academic achievement or social interactions in these students (Assouline et al., 2012).

IDENTIFICATION

Identifying gifted with learning disabilities is difficult. Often, either the giftedness or the learning disability is more apparent, and these students are not evaluated beyond their initial diagnosis. Conversely, the giftedness and the

learning disability might mask each other and make the child appear to have average academic ability.

The identification and assessment of gifted students with disabilities was examined by Ruban and Reis (2005). They found that, although there is more information about gifted students with learning disabilities than there has ever been, there is disagreement about the appropriate way to assess, identify, and provide programming for these individuals. However, agreement does exist in the belief that it is important to minimize weakness and encourage strengths in these individuals. There must be a broadened definition of giftedness in order to appropriately find and help these students. Solely focusing on IQ scores, argued Ruban and Reis, does not properly identify these individuals. Rather, teachers and parents should be educated about the characteristics of individuals who are gifted and learning disabled.

Ruban and Reis (2005) compiled a list of characteristics of gifted students with learning disabilities which helps teachers correctly identify students who may otherwise be overlooked. They listed the characteristics which hamper identification as gifted as well as the characteristic strengths of gifted students. Frustration with the inability to master a skill was shown to hamper identification, as was learned helplessness and a general lack of motivation. Disruptive classroom behavior and a lack of organizational skills was also a common characteristic which lowered the likelihood that a student was identified as gifted. In contrast, certain characteristic strengths of gifted students, such as advanced vocabulary use, high levels of creativity and productivity, and a wide variety of interests, helped students become recognized and identified as gifted. Ruban and Reis (2005) suggested that teachers consider both types of common characteristics when working with students.

Silverman (2003) addressed the idea of masking, or compensation, and explained how it works in the brains of gifted and learning disabled children. The asynchronous development typical of gifted children is exaggerated when high levels of intelligence are combined with a disability. It is difficult, Silverman argued, to identify these children as either gifted or learning disabled because one trait compensates for the other. This compensation is the ability of the brain to solve a problem (the learning disability) in a different way. Gifted individuals excel at problem-solving and those with disabilities are no exception. The problem-solving ability of gifted children allows them to create ways to overcome their learning disabilities, making the students appear to be average in class work and test scores. It may also be difficult to determine whether a highly intelligent child actually does have a disability or whether their asynchrony is just extreme (Silverman, 2003).

In an article which examined the relationship between the learning disability label and gifted referrals, Bianco and Leech (2010) found that teachers were less likely to refer a child who had been labeled as learning disabled to be tested for gifted identification. Teachers who had been trained in gifted education, regular classroom teachers, and special education teachers were given profiles of students and asked to identify which should be referred for gifted programming. Most of the students labeled learning disabled were identified as being gifted far less often

than those students with the same characteristics but no label. Teachers trained in gifted education were the best at identifying gifted children with learning disabilities, and special education teachers were the worst. Their focus was on identifying skills deficits and remediation of the disability rather than identifying strengths. The authors proposed inadequate teacher training as the reason for the under identification of gifted and learning disabled students. They argued that teachers need to receive better training and become aware of how their personal biases effect student identification and access to appropriate programming. Failure to do so will allow continued focus on accommodations of disabilities and lowered expectations by both the teachers and the students themselves (Bianco & Leech, 2010).

Lovett (2013) contradicted most of the literature on gifted and learning disabled students and proposed that the label of "gifted and learning disabled" is being misused. The author claimed that the idea of high intelligence and learning disabilities masking each other is flawed. This assumption results in students being identified as gifted and learning disabled who do not actually meet the criteria of either. The student's IQ is not sufficiently high, and their skills deficit sufficiently low. Because identifying giftedness and learning disabilities is so complex and vague, it is being exploited by those advantaged individuals who want to make their average children seem like they are actually gifted. Lovett claims that being labeled both gifted and learning disabled, allows those children to take advantage of both labels. This not only leads to misidentification for these children, but leads to greater social inequality in school programs (Lovett, 2013).

Other disabilities

According to a study by Wood (2012), the Connors behavior rating scale used in identifying ADHD is an inaccurate tool for identifying ADHD in gifted children. Although the American Psychological Association lists ADHD as the most common behavioral disorder in children, there is no exact way to measure it. The Connors behavior rating scale diagnoses ADHD by comparing teacher and parent responses about behavior with that of normal children. But some behavioral traits of gifted children are similar to those associated with ADHD, such as inattention and social difficulties. Inattention may not be caused by ADHD, but by boredom from unstimulating classroom content, and social difficulties may be cause by the asynchronous development typical of gifted children. Rather than being identified as gifted, those children might be labeled as having ADHD, leading to misdiagnosis and over diagnosis (Wood, 2012).

Conversely, the ability of highly gifted children to hyper-focus on a task they are interested in may mask characteristics of both ADHD and high intelligence. This not only leads to a missed diagnosis of ADHD, but could also lead to a gifted child remaining unidentified. As a result of these factors, Wood (2012) suggested an ADHD test for gifted students which compares their behavior to that of their gifted peers, not with average children. This new test would more accurately assess behavior of gifted students and prevent the over-diagnosis and misdiagnosis of ADHD in this population (Wood, 2012).

Stein, Hetzel and Beck (2012) proposed that being an English language learner can mask giftedness in the same way in which having a learning disability can. They argued that the current identification procedures are inaccurate for identifying gifted English language learners. They advocate for varied methods of identifying giftedness for diverse populations of students. Just as is the case for students with disabilities, teachers focus on the label of ELL when planning programming for these students. If there were better procedures for identifying these gifted students, their strengths rather than their weakness would be addressed (Stein et al., 2012).

Gifted children with dyslexia are often overlooked because their giftedness is masked, much like children with other disabilities. According to Peer and Tresman (2005), dyslexic children's giftedness is hard to identify because there is often a large difference between IQ tests and achievement due to the nature of the disability. The individual components of a test should be examined in order to gain a better understanding of a dyslexic student's strengths and weaknesses, rather than use the typical model of gifted identification for dyslexic students. This would result in a better understanding of a student's overall functioning (Peer & Tresman, 2005).

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention, or RtI, is a process used in schools to provide early intervention to students experiencing academic and/or behavioral challenges. While there is no Federal mandate about how to implement RtI, most states utilize it in some form. Typically there are three tiers of behavioral and academic interventions, and each tier becomes progressively more intense. In tier one, schools screen all students for health, language, and academic proficiency. The curriculum and instruction are adjusted for those students who have not mastered these skills. If students do not respond to tier one, they are referred to tier two, which consists of progressively more aggressive interventions, such as behavior intervention plans, and more frequent monitoring. Students who do not respond to tier two intervention are referred to tier three, otherwise known as special education. The goals of RtI are for the simultaneous occurrence of both assessment and academic interventions tailored to the needs of the student.

Horne and Shaughnessy (2013) suggest that, because defining giftedness is complex and controversial, RtI can be used as a way to identify and address the needs of gifted students without the need for a label of "gifted". RtI is meant to limit the time a student spends outside the classroom on specialized instruction. The assessments and educational interventions used in RtI, which are tailored to a student's individual needs, are ideal for identifying and implementing appropriate programming for gifted students in the regular classroom (Horne & Shaughnessy, 2013).

Yssel, Adams, Clark & Jones (2014) supported the use of RtI for gifted students, suggesting that it is a better method for identifying those gifted students who have learning disabilities than previous methods. They argued that, because using RtI replaces the "wait for failure" method, skills deficiencies are uncovered which otherwise might have gone unnoticed because of the masking ability of high

intelligence. Additionally, those schools who use RtI for low achieving students could use it for high achieving students in the same way. Through RtI, skills discrepancies can be discovered and proper programming implemented to help students remediate weaknesses and increase strengths. Yssel et al. (2014) did admit, however, that with RtI, the social and emotional needs of gifted and learning disabled students are not met, and therefore, appropriate programming must follow the initial identification.

Crepeau-Hobson and Bianco (2011) observed that RtI alone is not an effective way to identify and meet the needs of twice exceptional students. With the increased use of RtI in identifying learning disabilities, the talents and the weakness of gifted and learning disabled students are going unidentified because one masks the other. Instead, the authors recommend an approach which uses standardized assessments for measuring giftedness inserted into the RtI framework to more accurately identify and address the needs of these students (Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2011).

McKenzie (2010) also discussed why RtI is insufficient for identifying gifted students with learning disabilities. If RtI is being used as the only way to diagnose a disability, students who have had short-term, intensive one-to-one instruction will be falsely identified as being responsive. Rather being identified and accommodated through RtI, students' learning disabilities and high intelligence will remain unidentified. McKenzie argues that there should be continued use of IQ and achievement testing to understand and identify discrepancies between achievement and potential rather than using RtI as the sole method for identifying learning disabilities and high intelligence. Instead of using one or the other, RtI and traditional assessment can complement each other in correctly identifying gifted students with learning disabilities (McKenzie, 2011).

PROGRAMMING

The programming needs of gifted students varies from student to student, and so do the needs of those gifted students who also have learning disabilities. There is no one-size fits-all program for these students, and attempting to solely address the learning disability, or the giftedness, will result in inadequate instruction. There are many ideas about how best to help these students, but the point on which nearly every expert agrees is that both the weaknesses and the strengths of the student should be addressed simultaneously. Waiting until a learning disability is remediated,, at the expense of nurturing the strength, can cause disappointment, frustration, and low self-confidence. Ignoring the disability, and focusing on the strength alone, will also result in frustration, underachievement, and stress. It is also important that programming meet the unique social and emotional needs of these students.

Talent development

In a review of programming for gifted and learning disabled students, Reis and Ruban (2005) suggested that there has been a move toward providing these students with programming that is individualized, comprehensive, and focuses on

strengths rather than weaknesses. The authors maintain that many gifted and learning disabled students have strengths and weakness which often remain unidentified until college. In order to help these students achieve, teachers must not simply remediate their learning disability, but help them learn compensation strategies to help them overcome their weaknesses and capitalize on their strengths. The authors recommended three types of interventions: school-based, partial pull-out programs, and self-contained programs (Reis & Ruban, 2005).

Schools must focus on strengths, not weaknesses (Reis & Ruban, 2005). In order to achieve this, IEPs must be written to provide classroom accommodations which address both. Reis and Ruban also emphasized extracurricular opportunities as an opportunity for a gifted and learning disabled student to be successful. Mentors, after school clubs, and independent projects that are hands-on and in their areas of interest, should be provided to give these students a chance to be successful in doing what they enjoy. Opportunities for students to be successful should also be provided within the regular classroom, not just in pull-out programs. Additionally, counseling and personal support must be provided depending on the needs of the student (Reis & Ruban, 2005).

Nielsen and Higgins (2005) compared the experience of a gifted and learning disabled student entering school to a storm in which they are bombarded by experiences of failure; where they do not fit in with peers, have challenges academically, and cannot live up to teacher, parent and self-expectations. These students cannot balance their areas of giftedness with their areas of difficulty. The teacher can be the eye of the storm for these students by providing a "safe haven in the eye of the educational storm" (Nielsen & Higgins, 2005, p.15). This "safe haven" requires teachers to understand the student's emotional needs, and provide appropriate programming which addresses strengths and well as weakness, is consistent from year to year, and is coordinated between gifted and special education. These teachers also need to teach students how to become their own "eye of the storm" and weather future challenges independently (Nielsen & Higgins, 2005).

Baum, Cooper, and Neu (2001) and Crepeau-Hobson and Bianco (2011) suggested a dual differentiation approach to meeting the needs of gifted students with learning disabilities. They advocated for programming that simultaneously addressed strengths and weaknesses through talent development. Baum, et al. (2001) presented Project High Hopes as a model of successful dually differentiated curriculum adapted to the needs of individual students. Students in the program did not work on remediation of their learning difficulties, but instead, learned how to use their specific talents to compensate. In order to achieve this, Project High Hopes provided opportunities for authentic problem-solving in real world situations, an area where gifted students excel Students were exposed to new topics and receive lessons from mentors and professionals. As students become more independent, they begin to use their problem-solving skills to use their strengths and create alternative solutions. The learning environment of Project High Hopes is one of high expectations and successes. Social and emotional difficulties commonly found in gifted and learning disabled students were greatly reduced when they were surrounded by an environment which emphasized their

strengths rather than on remediating weaknesses. The Baum, et al. (2001) also noted that when education is focused on success, the motivation for learning increases as well

Crepau-Hobson and Bianco (2011) suggested that this approach actually allows gifted students to overcome their learning disabilities. Alternate methods of assessment are also important in this model. Rather than relying on test scores, which often fail to adequately measure the strengths of gifted students with learning disabilities, Project High Hopes focuses on student projects (Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2011).

Wellisch and Brown (2012) used a modified version of Gagne's model of Giftedness and Talent to describe a path for gifted achievers *and* gifted underachievers to participate in an academic talent development program. Whereas Gagne's model allowed only highly achieving children to participate in talent development programs, and any disability was to be remediated before a student could participate, Wellisch and Brown's version was much more inclusive. Their model, the "Inclusive Identification and Progression Model", outlined a program which can support children's giftedness as well as address their learning disabilities. It recommended that schools use approaches which protect and develop student's self-esteem. The social and emotional needs of gifted students with learning disabilities are not separate from their academic needs, and must be addressed. The authors stress that schools will do a better job of challenging these students if the needs of the whole child are met, as opposed to Gagne's model of focusing on strengths only after learning difficulties have been corrected (Wellisch & Brown, 2012).

Ruban and Reis (2005) suggested that the identification of gifted and learning disabled students is not the end point of the assessment process, but the beginning. The identification and assessment of these students obtained through RtI should be linked to programs, such as the talent pool approach, in the schoolwide enrichment model (SEM). The authors propose that Renzulli's model of talent development fosters creative productivity, and is useful in developing programming for gifted students with learning disabilities who may struggle to find their strengths in regular programming. Rather than using the traditional method of identification for gifted students, Renzulli's Talent Pool strategy and SEM identifies the strengths of a large number of students, including those who are gifted and have learning disabilities, then provides opportunities and special programs based on those strengths (Ruban & Reis, 2005).

Coleman (2005) presented academic strategies for teaching gifted and learning disabled students based on three key principles of learning. First, teachers build on the knowledge that students already have. Second, students must have a broad foundation of knowledge to build upon. And third, students should be able to think about their own learning processes in order to take control of their own learning. In order to use these principles, teachers must insert them into their everyday instructional design (Coleman, 2005).

The four variables of success for gifted and learning disabled students, according to Coleman (2005), are time, structure, complexity, and support. Teachers can use time in order to provide flexibility for students with different

needs. Some students may need more time to learn a concept, while others can progress quickly through. Three areas of structure essential to the success of students with learning disabilities are structure of curriculum and content, structure of pedagogy, and structure of learning environments. Lastly, a supportive environment, such as allowing the use of calculators and spell checkers, allows these students to work on their strengths without the burden of having to worry about the limitations of their weaknesses. Teachers maintain the highest level of complexity they can while adjusting the other variables to ensure the success of every student. By using these theories of learning, teachers can maximize the learning potential of gifted students while minimizing the effects of their learning disabilities (Coleman, 2005).

Newman and Zupco (2006) suggested a learning approach for the education of gifted and learning disabled students, which involves higher order thinking skills and the creation of an original product. Their article presents the case study of a gifted student with ADHD, whose learning problems were improved through the implementation of a talent development program focused on higher order thinking skills, within his areas of strengths. The student was able concentrate his academic work on his strengths, and found ways to compensate for his weaknesses, which provided an opportunity for him to achieve success, and increase his self-concept. Newman and Zupco point out that when gifted and learning disabled students use higher order thinking skills to create original products, they are using their strengths to overcome their weaknesses. Otherwise, the authors note, when teachers focus on remediation at the expense of strengths, students can become unmotivated, underachievers with low self-esteem (Newman & Zupco, 2006).

In a discussion on the puzzling contradictions of being both gifted and learning disabled, Baum (n.d.) suggested that parents and teachers place too much focus on the disability, rather than on the strengths of these children. Students must learn to understand their own strengths and weaknesses in order to learn how to compensate, rather than merely remediating their learning disability. Programs that value their gifts, address their disabilities, and provide emotional support in dealing with asynchronous abilities, are essential in meeting the needs of gifted and learning disabled students (Baum, n.d.).

Baum (n.d.) proposed guidelines in developing programming for these students. First, the focus must be on developing the areas of strength. Programs which focus on weaknesses rather than strengths can cause low self-esteem, depression, and underachievement. Second, students must be provided with an environment that values individual differences. Rather than provide curriculum that is watered down, teachers should find alternate options for learning which are not easier, but simply challenge the student in ways in which they can be successful, such as group work or original projects rather than traditional assignments. Third, Baum advised teachers to encourage compensation strategies because learning disabilities tend to be permanent. Learning how to cope with a learning disability is far more effective for these students than remediation in the long-term (Baum, n.d.).

Emotional Needs

King (2005) explained how programming can meet the academic needs of gifted and learning disabled students, as well as their social and emotional needs. Remediation of learning disabilities is not adequate for increasing the self-concept of these students. Merely addressing a student's disabilities does not create opportunities for them to focus on their strengths, causing decreased self-esteem, underachievement, and stress. Focusing on their talents, however, will increase their self-concept and motivation. They key to providing good programming for gifted and learning disabled students is to use instructional strategies that are balanced between attention to strengths and weaknesses, and which then apply those instructional strategies to real-world learning experiences (King, 2005).

King (2005) also proposed that teachers help students learn coping strategies and work on gaining an understanding of their disability. Obtaining the support of parents, teachers, and counselors is also an essential part of increasing the emotional well-being of gifted students with learning disabilities. Programming which considers their social and emotional needs is essential to their long-term success. This support system, which targets the whole child, the author argues, will have a much greater chance of helping gifted and learning disabled students reach their full potential (King, 2005).

Webb and Dietrich (2005) provided a neurologist's perspective on gifted and learning disabled children. They also emphasized that a whole child approach is the best way to provide adequate programming for these students. That approach should take into account a child's social context, such as family, school and friendships, as well as mental health needs and neurological well-being. They assert that schools commonly use a "one label per customer" model, and when a school has identified a child as either gifted or learning disabled, they stop looking for any additional challenges the child may be experiencing. Most gifted students with learning disabilities do not need extensive interventions, and would likely respond well to minor accommodations if they had a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. The authors suggested that IEPs tend to focus on weaknesses rather than strengths. When teachers only address a student's disability, the student remains unchallenged. Teachers tend to lower expectations for students when they only focus on their weaknesses. It is most important for these students and their teachers to discover what they excel at, not what they cannot do (Webb & Dietrich, 2005).

SUMMARY

Students who are both gifted and learning disabled have unique characteristics and academic, social and emotional needs. These students face distinctive challenges because they display common characteristics of gifted children, such as heightened emotional sensitivity, asynchronous development, and high self-expectations, while also dealing with a learning disability that may cause any of those characteristics to become more challenging. Teachers and parents often do not recognize the characteristics of these children, especially if the learning disability is the only exception that has been identified. It is common

for a disability to be masked by high intelligence, or vice versa. There are challenges associated with identification of both giftedness and learning disabilities. Proper identification of both the giftedness and the learning disability are essential in helping these students succeed. Addressing only one of the characteristics, whether through gifted programming, or through remediation of the disability, will result in failure to meet the needs of these students. Programs which focus on strengths, rather than, or in addition to weaknesses, are an important part of the whole child approach. When students feel success, they are more likely to remain engaged in with education and increase their self-esteem and achievement.

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