

1. Definitions of Gifted with Learning Difficulties



For years, educators and researchers have been interested and puzzled by students who are Gifted and have Learning Difficulties. A definition is hard to find. The following are several descriptions of these twice exceptional, asynchronous, and paradoxical learners:

- A child who is Gifted/LD is "simply one who exhibits great talent or strength in certain areas and disabling weaknesses in others" (Baum 1989).
- "Gifted/LD students are students of superior intellectual ability who exhibit a significant discrepancy between this potential and their level of performance in a particular academic area such as reading, mathematics, spelling, or written expression. Their academic performance is substantially below what would be expected based on their general intellectual ability. As with other children exhibiting learning disabilities, this discrepancy is not due to the lack of educational opportunity in that academic area or other health impairment". (Brody & Mills 1997)
- Seeking evidence of a discrepancy between ability and achievement is particularly important for identifying students who are academically talented and learning disabled. (Brody & Mills 1997)

- It is important to keep in mind when looking at definitions of Gifted/LD that this is a unique and heterogeneous group. Each student has a different version of this condition. This elusive quality often leads to students “falling off the radar”.
- Gifted/LD children develop in an even more extremely uneven manner. They are more complex and intense than their gifted age-mates, and no single grade-level curriculum will meet their needs. (Singer 2000)
- They are qualitatively and quantitatively different from each other on tasks assessing a range of intelligent behaviour. As well, their level of intelligence, among other factors, may influence their emotional and behavioural responses to persistent failure, parent and teacher expectations and, most importantly, remediation.
- The child's giftedness and learning disabilities may both lie in related academic areas - or they may not. Students who are Gifted/LD often do not get referred unless they exhibit a behaviour problem". (Lyon 1989).
- Identification is a significant problem for this population.

Gifted and Learning Difficulties:
How can that be?

It can be and it is.



The giftedness may mask the learning difficulty.

And the learning difficulty may mask the giftedness.



References:

Corinne Bees, recently retired, was a special education teacher who designed and taught a program called the “GOLD” Program. The program, at Prince of Wales Secondary School in Vancouver, B.C., is for students who are Gifted with Learning Difficulties (Gifted/LD).

Adapted by Get into Neurodiversity for a global audience