

Project Overview

Twice exceptional learners are defined by the National Association for Gifted Children as those who show evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility guidelines and show characteristics of giftedness. There are several ways in which students with these needs might be misidentified both for identification of giftedness and identification of disabilities.

In gifted identification, we know that current assessment methods may not identify students from diverse backgrounds, such as those who are Black or Hispanic, who are English Language Learners, or those who also have disabilities (e.g., Ford, 2010; Grissom & Redding, 2016; Hodges et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2019). Our best efforts, using mechanisms such as universal screening, nonverbal tests, student portfolios, and affective checklists, have still under-identified students in these groups (Erwin & Worrell, 2011; Hodges et al., 2018).

In disability identification, students of color are disproportionately identified with disabilities, including with learning disabilities (Sullivan & Bal, 2013). Furthermore, learning disabilities identification has repeatedly been shown to be problematic, particularly using methods that require the use of IQ tests (Kranzler et al., 2019; Maki & Adams, 2021). Such methods are psychometrically flawed and tend to over- and under-identify students depending on student academic skill profile, with students with lower academic skills systematically being under-identified (Maki et al., 2019). However, multilevel systems of support (MTSS) identification methods hold promise for identifying students with learning disabilities because they provide intervention services as part of the identification process, thus ensuring that students receive much needed academic support. Despite the promise of this method, MTSS methods, students with academic difficulties, particularly in reading, continue to demonstrate reading difficulties. Thus, there is a need to examine alternative intervention approaches that target students' reading needs while capitalizing on student strengths.

These identification issues are further complicated in twice-exceptional learners because gifts and disabilities may have a masking effect. In general, twice exceptional students fall into four categories: (a) both giftedness and additional exceptionality are identified, (b) only giftedness is identified, (c) only additional exceptionality are identified, or (d) none of the exceptionality are identified. For example, students with gifts may not be identified as having a learning disability because their giftedness leads to high performance in some area. Further, they may also struggle to demonstrate their giftedness if they have a learning disability. If learners cannot be identified, they cannot be appropriately served.

This project aims to identify and serve gifted students with learning disabilities, and specifically with reading difficulties, by offering a combination of strengths-based identification methods and strengths-based programming.

We will begin with a talent scouting/talent development approach. In gifted education, this method delivers programs that allow students to express their potential, allowing for a broader identification of gifted learners (Horn et al., 2021; Swanson et al., 2021). To begin our project, we will develop and implement a strengths-based program for all third-grade students in an identified district. Concurrently, we will develop a task-based strengths assessment to identify students who are gifted in learning, creativity, and leadership. Students will complete year-long participation ending in an intensive summer camp experience. These students will also complete pre- and posttest measures of the task-based assessments. Identification rates will be compared between the district's standard criterion and the newly implemented task-based strengths assessment. Lastly, because there may be issues

Scope of Work Template Form

in relying on school district identification of learning disabilities, we will focus on reading disabilities for identification and intervention. We will identify reading disabilities in third grade students and provide Tier 3 targeted reading interventions in addition to strengths-based assessments and programming. This will allow us to compare the identification rates of both reading difficulties and giftedness using strength and task-based assessments with the traditional methods of identification in the district. Together, these aims will provide support for using task-based strengths assessments and programming to identify and meet the needs of gifted students with learning disabilities.