



# The Twice-Exceptional (2e) Learner

Devon MacEachron, PhD

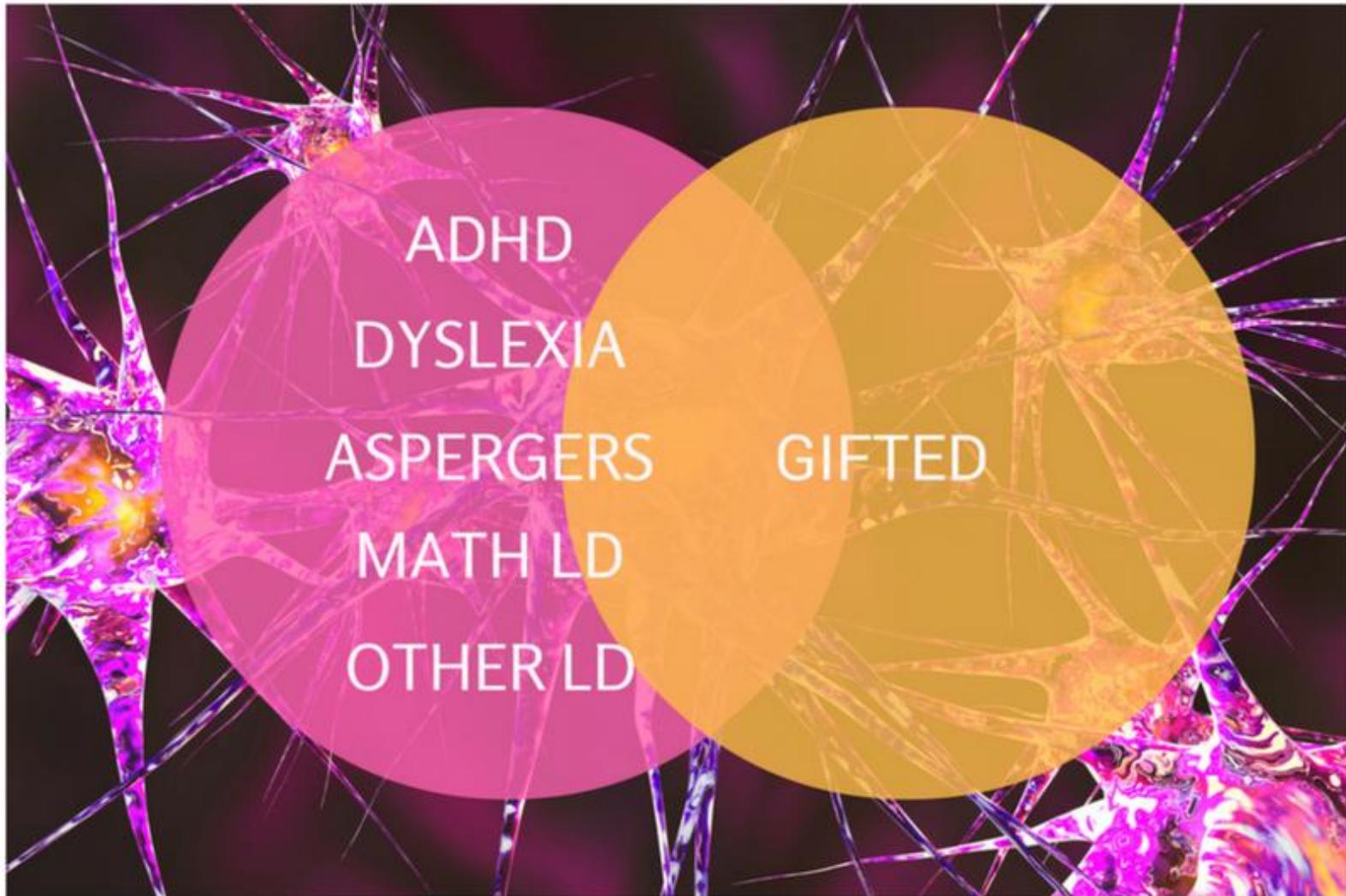


# What does Twice-Exceptional (2e) Mean?

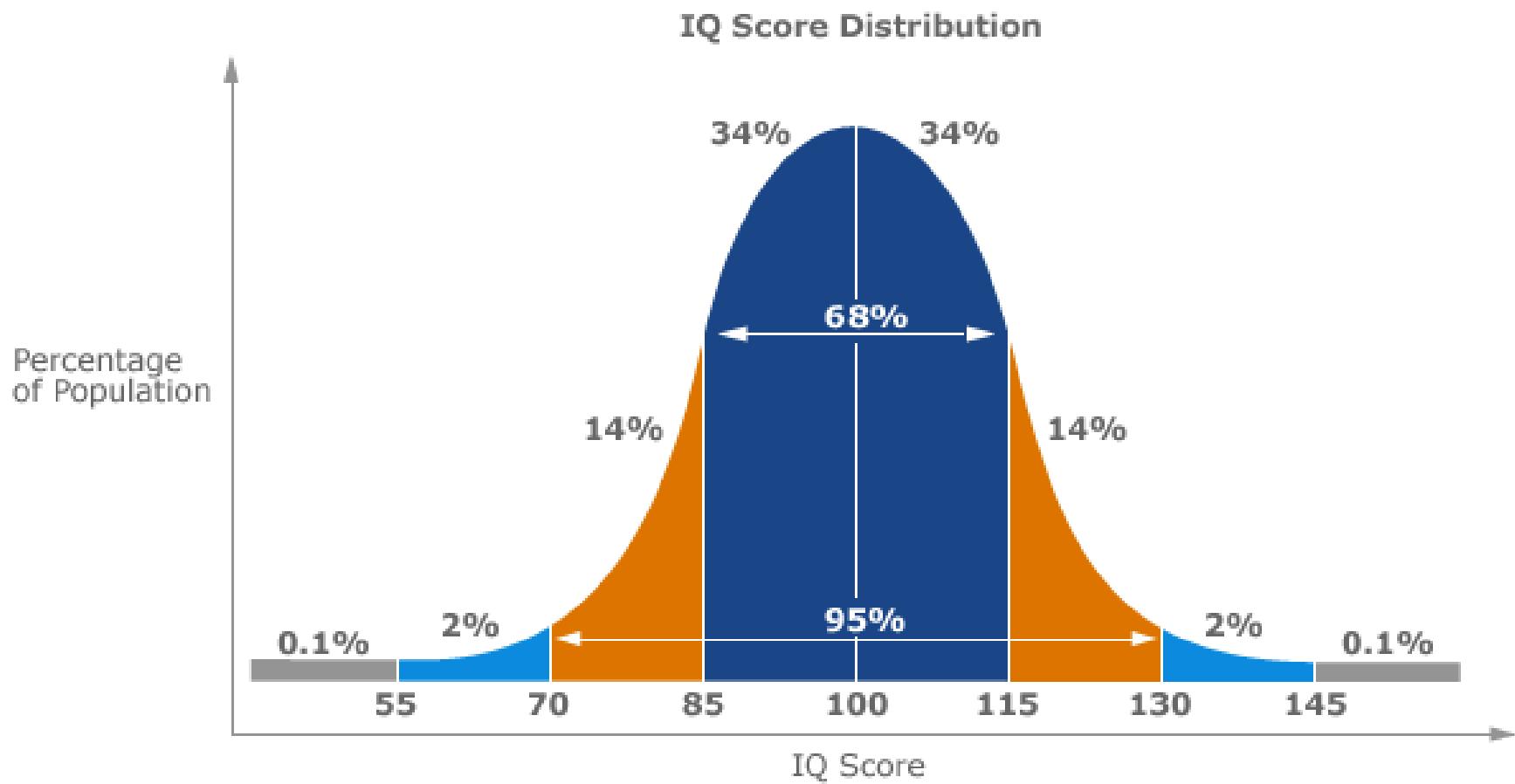
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- A term for high-ability children with learning difficulties or disabilities.
- The word “exceptional” expresses the idea that abilities are at the extreme ends of a range.
- The word “twice” refers to the exceptionalities being in two areas: one in an area of **strength** and the other in an area of **weakness**.
- Many students are not just twice exceptional - but rather thrice or more (because problems often occur in clusters co-morbidities).
- Secondary problems include anxiety, depression.

# Mixed Profile of Strengths and Weaknesses Presents Challenges



# Global Full Scale IQ



# The “G” Words (Gifted and Genius)

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- Gifted, genius, able, capable, intelligent, bright, smart
- Not necessarily accomplished
- Have the potential to achieve in areas drawing on higher-order reasoning processes
- Should do well in school – unless something is getting in the way
- Not necessarily destined for great success – other abilities come into play (e.g. people skills, motivation).

# Cognitive Strengths in 2e Learners



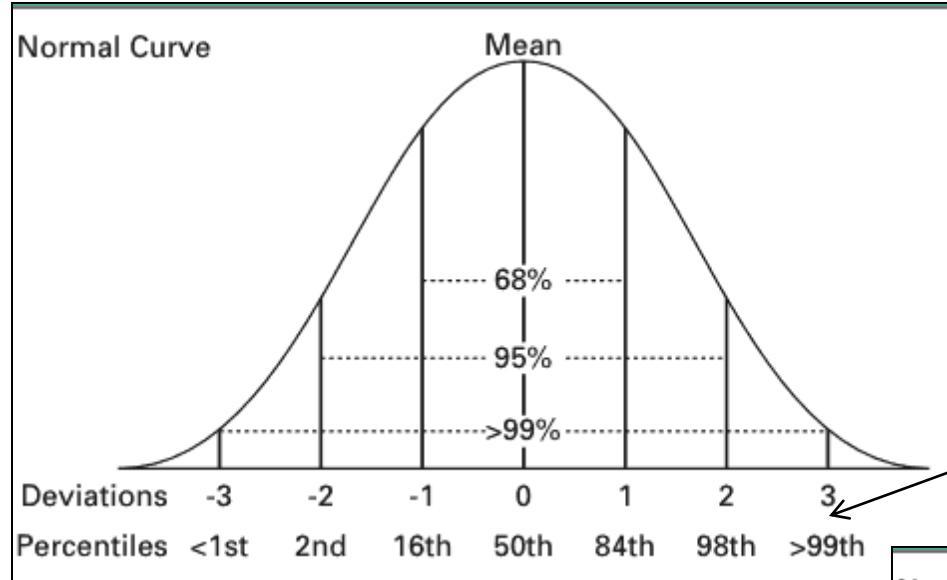
# Cognitive Weaknesses that Cause Reading Difficulties in 2e Learners

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- Phonological processing
- Orthographic processing
- Rapid naming speed
- Oral language (receptive/expressive)
- ADHD
- Asperger's

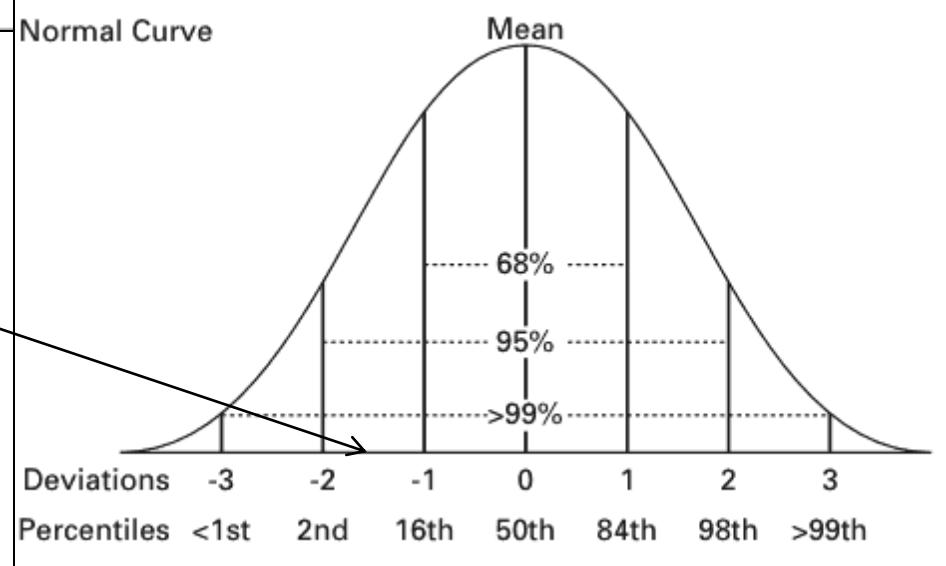


# 2E with Phonological Decoding Weakness



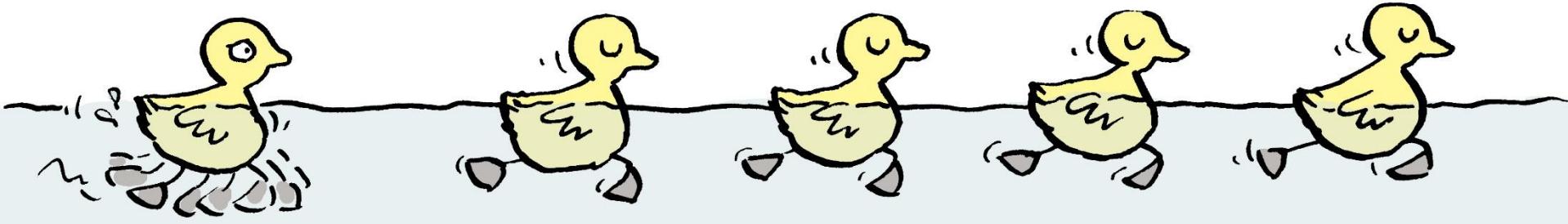
Verbal Comprehension 99%

Phonological Decoding 6%



# 2e Learners are Often Not Diagnosed

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- 2e learners often fail to be diagnosed as gifted or learning disabled.
- Their disabilities and strengths are hidden.
- They're like a duck paddling furiously to keep up.
- Stealth dyslexia: verbally-bright students who appear to be at grade level but are dyslexic.

# When is a Weakness a Disability?

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- Students with stealth dyslexia may not look “disabled.” Are they really?
- Yes, if they display the profile of cognitive ability weaknesses associated with dyslexia.
- Yes, if they are performing below expectations given their ability.
- Diagnosis of disability is generally based on APA DSM-5 and ICD-10 criteria.
- It’s complicated by the “average person standard.”
- Ability/achievement gap *is* relevant for 2e learners.



## Conundrum Kids

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- The combination of strengths and weaknesses can puzzle parents, teachers and professionals.
- May have been identified as gifted, as ld, or not have been identified at all.
- May be accused unfairly of lacking motivation and told to “just try harder.”
- The very possibility of a disability in a bright/gifted child is frequently questioned and misunderstood.
- Skeptics abound.

# Identified as Bright or Gifted

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- Can usually work at or above grade level until school production demands increase (often in middle school).
- “Sudden” underachievement is often attributed to laziness, lack of motivation, or social distractions.
- Parents and teachers admonish student to “try harder,” “you’re so smart – you can do it if you just try.”
- Self-concept plunges as student questions intelligence.



# Identified as Having a Learning Disability

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- Weaknesses are evident from an early school-age, gifts are hidden.
- An assessment for strengths was never conducted, or ability scores were depressed.



- Strengths may be displayed outside of school in hobbies, extracurricular interests.
- Student does not self-identify as being smart and may “dumb-down” to fit in with LD peers.



# Just Average

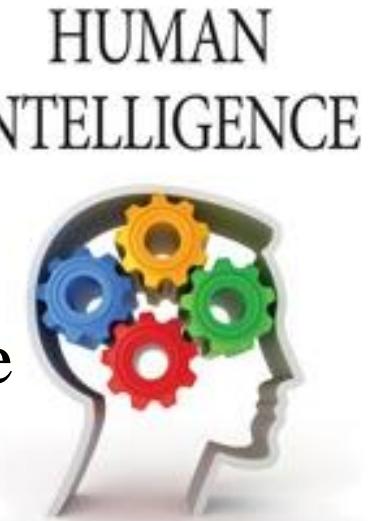
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- Student appears to have average abilities, but this is a result of strengths and weaknesses masking one another.
- Superior intellectual ability works overtime to try to compensate for the undiagnosed learning weaknesses.
- May perform at grade level but *well below* potential.
- Often not identified as gifted or LD because they are “good kids” who did not flag the need for attention due to behavior.
- Diagnosis may finally be initiated due to secondary depression or anxiety.

# Strengths and Weaknesses Profile Approach

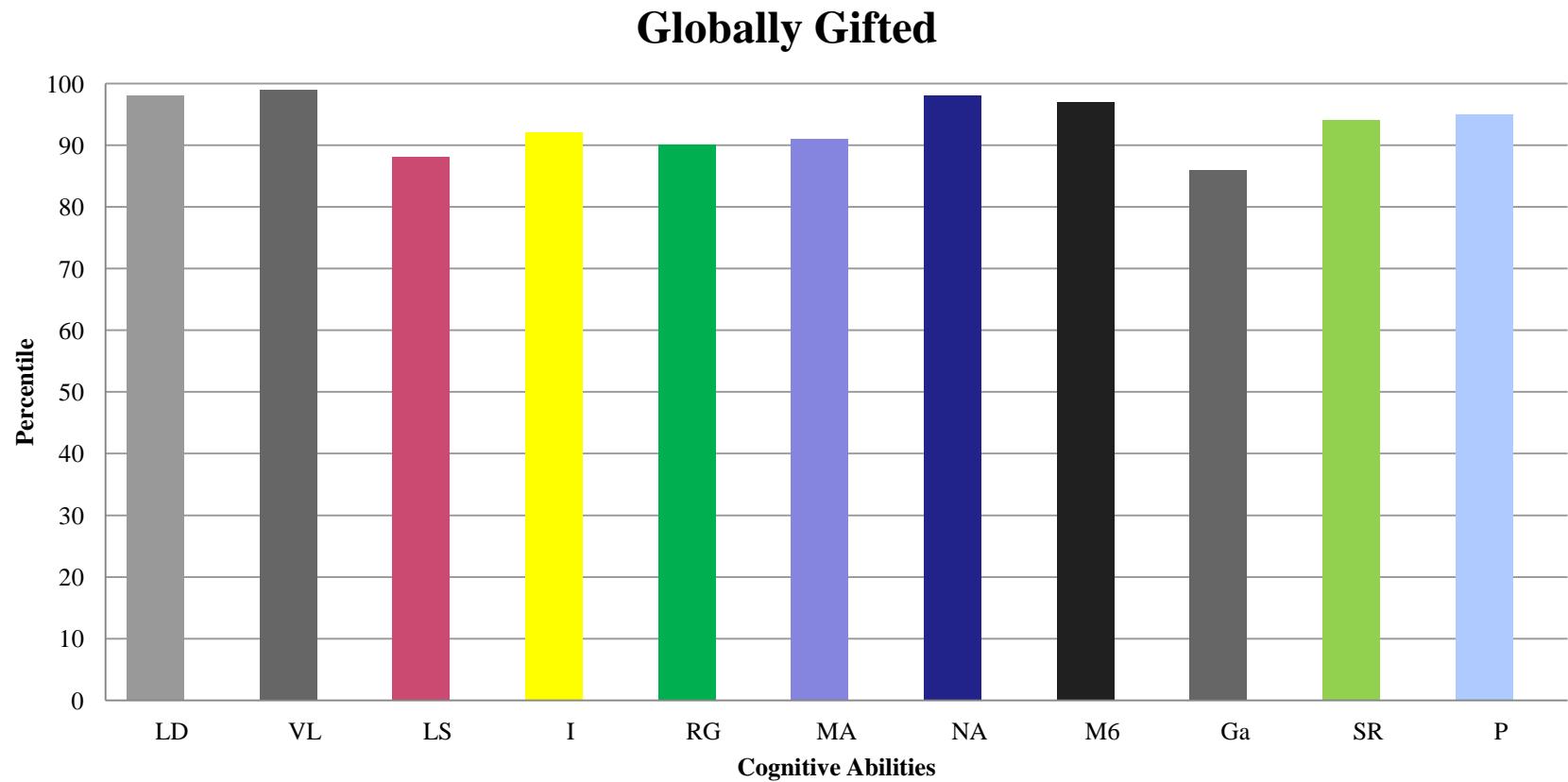
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- The CHC model is the most widely accepted and empirically grounded model of cognitive abilities.
- Over 80 different cognitive abilities are identified.
- About 30 contribute to learning in reading, writing, math, and oral language.
- We need to understand the student's complete profile of cognitive strengths and weaknesses to diagnose and provide strategic, targeted recommendations



# Stereotypical Gifted Profile

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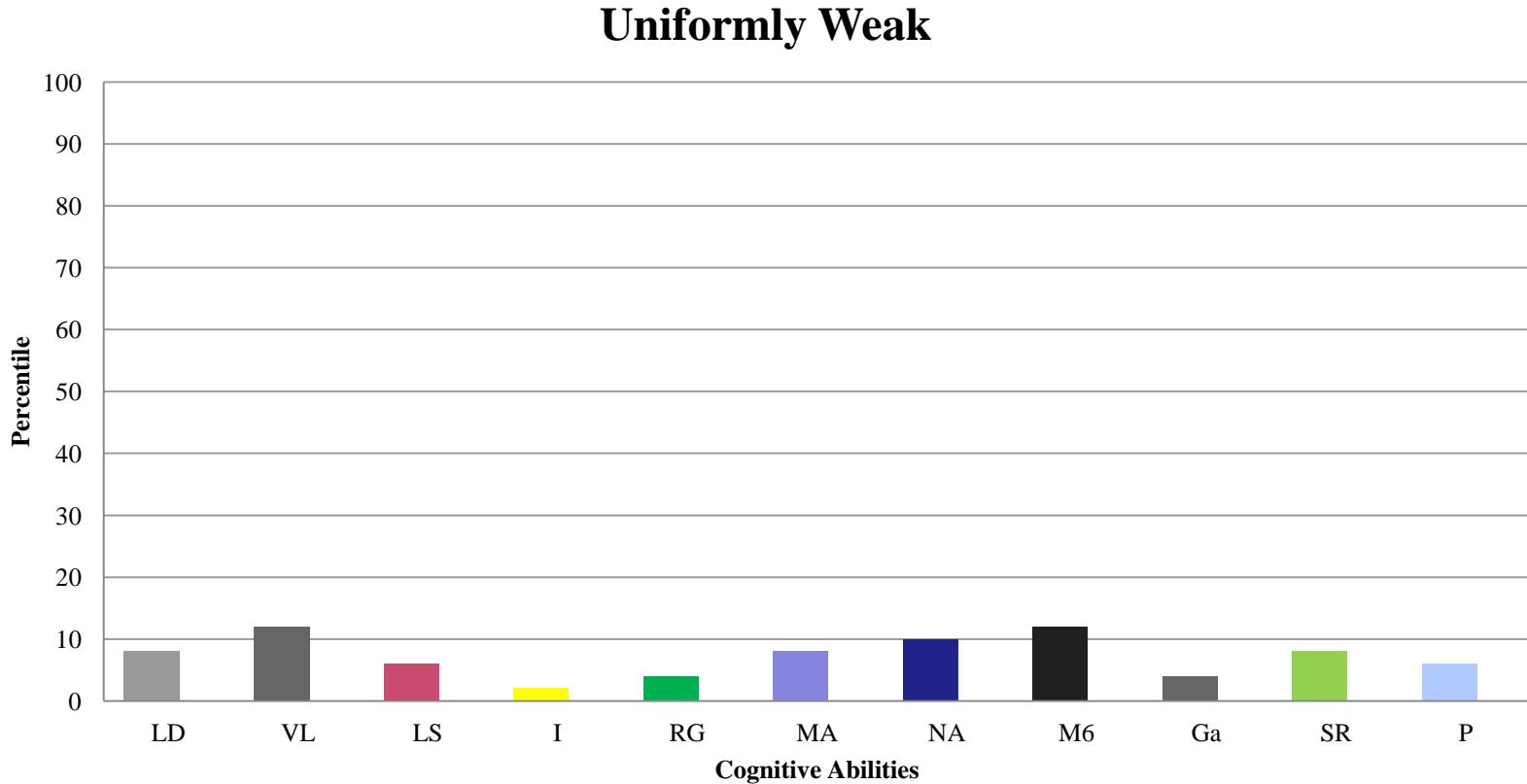


# Most of us Have Some Areas of Challenge

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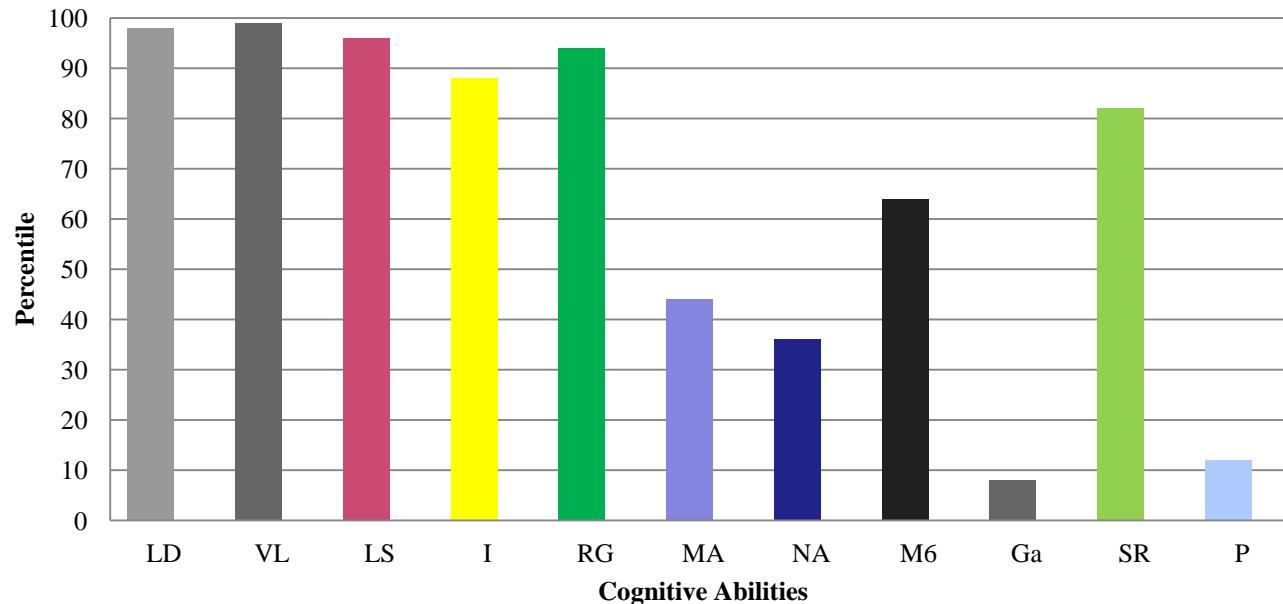
# Stereotypical LD Profile



# 2E Strengths and Weaknesses Profile

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- But if we all have strengths and weaknesses, what makes someone “2E”?
- Simultaneously having extreme or exceptional strengths *and* extreme or exceptional weaknesses



# What Does Being a 2e Student Feel Like?

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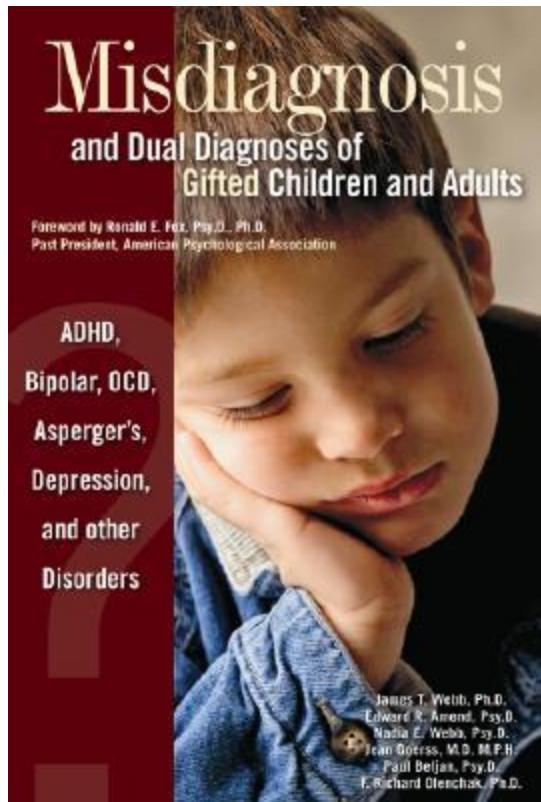
- School tasks are either too difficult or too easy – they're rarely just right.
- Frustrated, misunderstood.
- Question their intelligence, self-esteem at risk.
- May try to hide struggles by internalizing or externalizing.
- May lose enthusiasm for learning.
- Daily humiliations can exact an emotional toll, resulting in secondary depression, anxiety, or behavior problems.

# Anxiety and Depression in Twice-Exceptional Learners



# Assessment of 2e Learners

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- Early diagnosis is important.
- Misdiagnosis is very common .
- Getting an accurate diagnosis can occupy years of the child's early educational career.
- Assessment professionals should be knowledgeable about both sides of the equation: giftedness and *and* learning problems.
- Findings should reveal the child's complete profile of strengths and weaknesses as a learner, not just provide diagnoses.

# Why is Misdiagnosis so Common?

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- It can be difficult to distinguish between behaviors associated with one exceptionality and another.
- Is the student inattentive because she has a learning disability or ADHD, or because school is boring?
- Behaviors associated with giftedness can be “pathologized” – seen as problems rather than evidence of ability.
- Educators receive very little, if any, training in identifying and teaching 2e and gifted students



# How to Help 2e Learners

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- Learning plans should encompass 3 things: remediation, accommodation, and enrichment.
- **Remediation** is teaching/tutoring to improve skills in an area of weakness.
- **Accommodation** involves making adjustments to meet student's needs, e.g. extra time for exams.
- **Enrichment** involves providing acceleration and challenge in areas of strength and interests.
- Learning plans should emphasize the development of strengths and weaknesses, not just focus on “fixing what’s broken.”

# Remediation for the 2E Verbally Gifted Learner with Dyslexia

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- Same kind of reading intervention as typical dyslexic student, with a few caveats.
- Address specifically what the student needs to learn, employing curriculum compacting. May move at a faster pace. Do not group students with different kinds of problems e.g. comprehension with decoding.
- Utilize student's strengths to support learning.
- At some point, consider the diminishing returns from continuing with remediation.

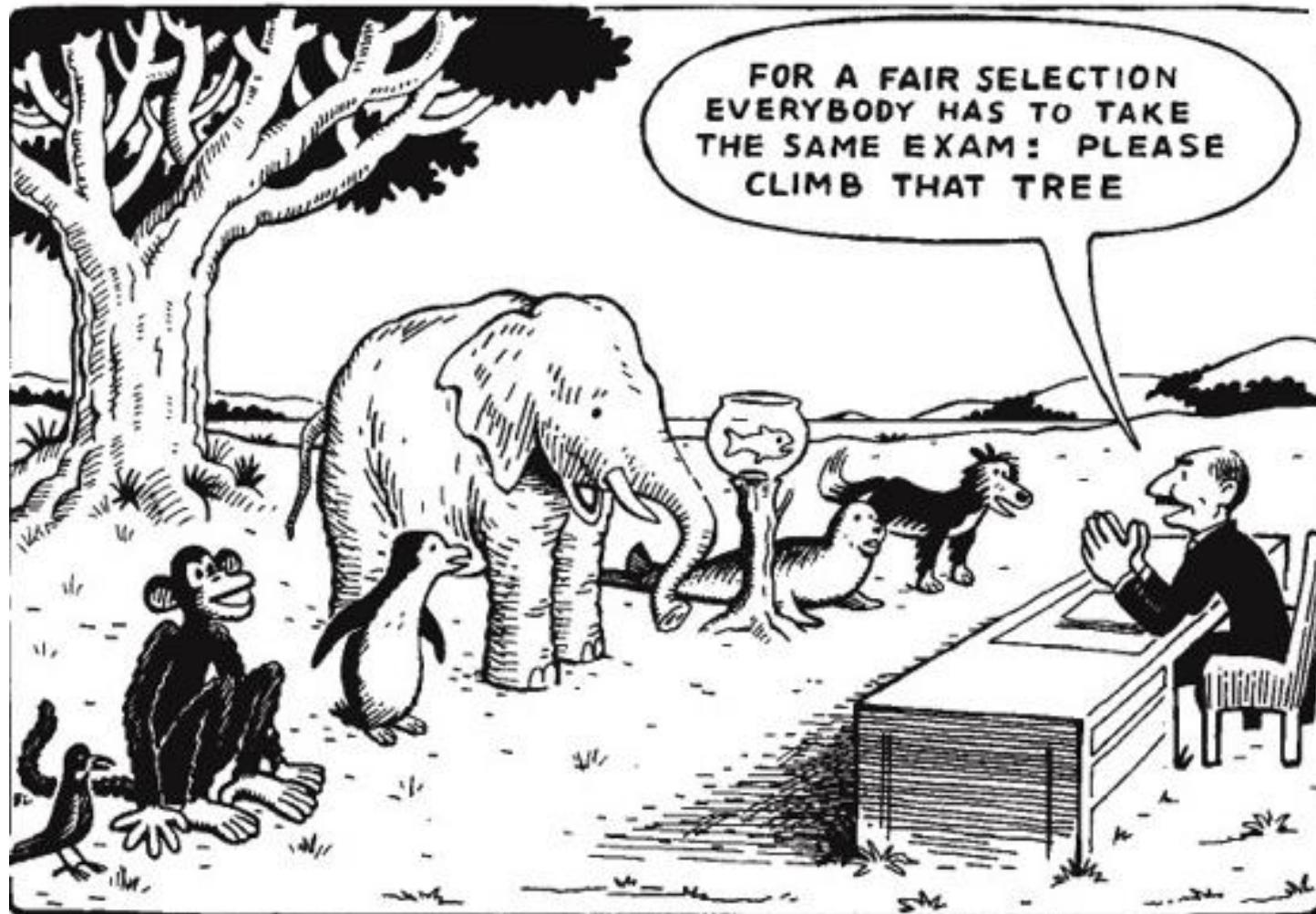
# Accommodation for the 2E Verbally Gifted Learner with Dyslexia

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- Provide extra time for assignments and testing.
- Grade assignments separately for content and mechanics.
- Provide text-to-speech and speech-to-text and teach how to use them.
- Allow some assignments to be done in an alternative production format.
- May need to excuse from foreign language study.
- May require lower (but not less challenging) class load in high school and college.

# To Each According to His Needs

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# **Enrichment** for the 2E Verbally Gifted Learner with Dyslexia

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- Challenge student with material at ability level, not independent reading level.
- Place in enrichment and honors classes despite weak independent reading skill. Provide supports.
- Provide opportunities to develop strengths and interests, e.g. debate club, book group, summer programs. Success increases motivation.
- Focusing on the student's genuine interests encourages high achievement.

# Utilize Strengths *and* Interests

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- Perhaps more powerful than innate strengths: consider the student's *interests*.
- Intrinsic motivation is associated with pursuit of one's interests – and with success.
- Even the most unmotivated, apathetic-seeming child is interested in something.
- Interests can also be formally assessed, but parents can also play detective to uncover them.
- Don't worry if interests are in different areas from strengths.

# How Parents can use Interests to Support Their Child's Development

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- Incorporate into **Remediation** where possible
- Interests should guide **Enrichment** plan
- Be creative and open-minded, support your child actively



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Website: [www.drdevon.com](http://www.drdevon.com)

E-mail: [dm@drdevon.com](mailto:dm@drdevon.com)