

Achievement Unlocked: The Twice Exceptional Student in the Latin Classroom

This workshop will focus on identification, recommendations for services, accommodations, step-by-step implementation, and advocacy for the twice exceptional learner. Twice exceptional students are students who are both gifted and have a physical, sensory or specific learning disability. These can also be students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or specific emotional or behavioral disorders. The research suggests that many of these students have deficits in learning, attention, and socialization behaviors (Foley Nicpon, et al., 2011) even as they are highly able in key aspects of learning Latin and other selected subjects. Because of the dual exceptionality, these students experience great difficulty in negotiating learning pathways (Assouline, Foley Nicpon, & , 2015). Recent studies also suggest that the numbers of these students have almost doubled in the last decade (NEA, 2006). Because of the individual issues that twice-exceptional profiles present, it is often difficult for them to be identified for gifted or special education programs as these students are likely to develop compensatory strategies that mask either the disability or the talent (Weinfeld et al., 2013).

Twice-exceptional students often excel in Latin because of the continuity of staying with one (or two) teacher(s) across multiple years, allowing educators to identify the student's needs and strengths over a greater period of time. The structure of the language also provides much-needed support for students who may have associated executive functioning difficulties. Moreover, the challenge and variety of Latin activities give students more opportunity to demonstrate their gifts and talents. Identification of giftedness with this population often only happens through challenging curriculum, if at all (Doobay & Foley Nicpon, 2014), which can be an argument for these students to take Latin.

This session will be an interactive workshop for teachers who are interested in learning about best practices for working with twice-exceptional students within a Latin environment. The workshop will include profiles of five twice exceptional students whom I have taught across multiple years, each now either graduated or in their senior year of high school. In my experience as a public school teacher, I have found that more than any other student population, twice exceptional students differ from the average student, and in fact, from each other, in nearly every respect, but particularly in terms of how they learn and what motivates them to achieve. The five students profiled represent atypical individuals whose learning issues are unique. Thus the presentation will focus on their needs and the intervention strategies that worked with them in the Latin classroom, with particular focus given to acceleration, metacognitive strategies, and long-term planning for college and career. The presentation will also highlight the students' accomplishments, Latin trajectory across the high school years and lessons learned from each profile.

In this session, attendees will be asked to participate in a lively discussion of classroom strategies and practices. Activities will focus on how to identify twice exceptional students in the Latin classroom, how to recommend them for services (either GT or Special Education), how to accommodate these students using best practices, how to implement these accommodations step-by-step, and how to advocate for student needs within a school setting, with colleagues and administrators. Activities will model best practices and include whole and small group discussion, problem-based learning strategies, interactive and multi-modal reading strategies and metacognitive reflections (Baska & VanTassel-Baska, 2013). Handouts, resource guides and materials to share within the school environment will be provided.

Bibliography

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