



# GIFTEDNESS | 2E | NEURODIVERSITY

A toolkit for language-aware, responsive, and neurodiversity-affirming educational practice



## UNDERSTANDING GIFTEDNESS AND 2E WITH GREATER NUANCE

### Beyond Visible Achievement

Giftedness may be reflected in high achievement—but it does not have to be. Learning environments, previous opportunities, barriers, expectations, and available support influence whether and how abilities become visible.

In twice-exceptional or 2e learners, high abilities and disability-related or other support needs coexist. Each can obscure the other. Grades, individual skills, and visible behavior therefore do not provide a complete picture on their own.

#### ASK QUESTIONS, DON'T ASSIGN LABELS

- What does the person experience?
- In which context does something occur?
- How much effort remains invisible?
- Which ability might be obscured by a barrier?
- What challenge and what support are needed at the same time?

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <p>Giftedness is reflected in particularly high achievement.</p> <p><b>MORE NUANCED VIEW</b></p> <p>High abilities can become visible through achievement. They may also remain hidden because of underchallenge, missing learning opportunities, anxiety, perfectionism, masking, disability, or an unsuitable learning environment.</p>   | <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <p>Gifted learners manage at school without support.</p> <p><b>MORE NUANCED VIEW</b></p> <p>High abilities do not protect learners from barriers, isolation, executive-function difficulties, sensory strain, or a lack of belonging. Gifted learners may also need support and changed learning conditions.</p> | <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <p>Certain traits clearly indicate giftedness, ADHD, or autism.</p> <p><b>MORE NUANCED VIEW</b></p> <p>Similar behaviors may have different meanings. Inattention, withdrawal, intensity, or strong reactions may be linked to underchallenge, overload, anxiety, deep concentration, or several factors at once.</p> |
| <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <p>Average or good achievement means there is no disability or learning difficulty.</p> <p><b>MORE NUANCED VIEW</b></p> <p>High ability, prior knowledge, masking, and considerable additional effort can compensate for difficulties for a long time. Achievement does not show how accessible, demanding, or sustainable learning is.</p> | <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <p>Needing support indicates a lower intellectual level.</p> <p><b>MORE NUANCED VIEW</b></p> <p>Difficulty with writing, planning, communication, or processing does not automatically reveal anything about conceptual thinking. Individual skills and intellectual level must be considered separately.</p>    | <p><b>MYTH</b></p> <p>Difficulties must be addressed first; advanced learning can come later.</p> <p><b>MORE NUANCED VIEW</b></p> <p>2e learners need support and intellectual challenge at the same time. Access, tools, and alternative forms of expression can reduce barriers without lowering complexity or expectations.</p>       |

Note: Trait lists and overlap models can prompt useful questions. They are not suitable for self-diagnosis or diagnosing others. Context, patterns across situations, inner experience, and professional assessment—where wanted or necessary—remain essential.



# GIFTEDNESS | 2E | NEURODIVERSITY

A toolkit for language-aware, responsive, and neurodiversity-affirming educational practice

## LANGUAGE THAT IS SHAPED BY LOOKING MORE CLOSELY

### Words Create Visibility and Access

Language does not describe people neutrally. It influences which abilities are recognized, which needs are taken seriously, and which forms of support become imaginable.

Terms can provide orientation, access, and community. They can also oversimplify, stigmatize, or frame difference as an individual deficit. Meaning, context, function, and the person's own language for themselves are therefore crucial.

| Term                     | Meaning                                                                                                                         | Pay attention                                                                                |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| gifted                   | High ability or high potential in one or more areas.                                                                            | Do not equate with consistently high achievement, perfection, or general superiority.        |
| 2e                       | High abilities together with disability-related, neurodivergent, or learning-related support needs.                             | Abilities and difficulties interact and may obscure one another.                             |
| neurodiversity           | Neurocognitive diversity as part of human variation.                                                                            | Refers to the diversity of a group or society, not to an individual person.                  |
| neurodivergent           | A neurocognitive way of functioning that differs from socially dominant norms.                                                  | Not a single medical profile. Respect people's own terminology.                              |
| disability               | Impairment, barrier, or the interaction between a person and their environment; for some, also a social and political identity. | Do not automatically replace it with softer terms. Consider self-identification and context. |
| support needs            | Specific support that enables access, communication, participation, well-being, or learning.                                    | Do not equate with low ability; describe needs in relation to the situation.                 |
| potential                | Possibilities for development under particular environmental and learning conditions.                                           | Do not reduce it to future achievement or productivity.                                      |
| masking                  | Strategies used to conceal or compensate for traits, difficulties, or needs.                                                    | Do not equate apparent adaptation with well-being; consider effort and exhaustion.           |
| spiky profile            | Markedly different abilities and support needs within one person.                                                               | Do not generalize high ability in one area to all areas.                                     |
| asynchronous development | Different rates of development across cognitive, emotional, social, physical, or executive domains.                             | May occur, but does not appear in the same way in all gifted people.                         |

### ASK FIRST, THEN CHOOSE YOUR WORDS

- Am I describing an observation, or already offering my interpretation?
- Am I naming a person, a profile, a need, or a barrier?
- Does the term help create access to support?
- Is the person's preferred terminology known?
- What might this wording leave invisible?
- Does it support self-determination, belonging, and a non-deficit-based perspective?

Note: Terms and community preferences change. This guide offers orientation, not a final dictionary.



# GIFTEDNESS | 2E | NEURODIVERSITY

A toolkit for language-aware, responsive, and neurodiversity-affirming educational practice



## WHO IS SEEN?

### What Do We Need to Change in the Learning Environment?

Neurodiversity-affirming practice does not begin by asking how people can adapt more successfully to existing structures. It takes their experiences, self-determination, and ways of communicating seriously while also asking which barriers are created by expectations, procedures, and learning environments.

The following questions can be used to review learning opportunities, materials, guidance, identification processes, and the design of learning environments in order to make them more responsive.

#### INTERPRETATION & IDENTIFICATION

- Do we distinguish between observed behavior, interpretation, support needs, and diagnosis?
- Which different explanations might be relevant to the visible behavior?
- Do we consider inner experience, context, and patterns across different situations?
- Do we equate achievement with ability, access, or well-being?
- Could high abilities obscure difficulties—or could difficulties obscure high abilities?
- Are there several and repeated ways to make abilities and support needs visible?
- Does access depend heavily on nomination, professional language, private assessment, or family advocacy?

#### CHALLENGE, SUPPORT & UDL

- Do high abilities and support needs remain visible at the same time?
- Do we distinguish a particular skill from intellectual or conceptual level?
- Does the learning environment provide appropriate depth, complexity, and challenge?
- Are barriers to access, engagement, and expression reduced without lowering conceptual expectations?
- Are there different ways to engage, access information, and express learning?
- Are planning, organization, communication, or sensory regulation supported?
- Is support flexible and free from pressure to justify it?

#### BELONGING, VOICE & CO-AGENCY

- Who defined the problem, goal, or support need?
- Is the learner's perspective treated as a relevant source of knowledge?
- Can the person disagree, decline, pause, or suggest alternatives?
- Are learner and family perspectives distinguished, even when both are important?
- Is it clear what actually changed as a result of feedback?
- Does the environment support authentic interests, intensive engagement, and different forms of participation?
- Does the person have to adapt strongly or mask in order to be accepted?

#### INTERSECTIONALITY & EQUITY

- Which identities, living conditions, and power relations interact in this situation?
- Which learning opportunities, language resources, and prior experiences are being assumed?
- Who is more readily recognized because they fit existing ideas of "typical" giftedness?
- Who carries additional effort in order to gain access, recognition, or support?
- Are advanced learning opportunities also accessible to people whose families have less time, money, or influence?
- Do we consider both access gaps and unequal opportunities to develop and demonstrate potential?
- Which barrier lies with the person—and which is created by the environment, procedures, or expectations?

#### CALLING-IN: OPENING CONVERSATIONS INSTEAD OF CORRECTING STATEMENTS

Calling-in means that, instead of immediately correcting or judging, we first ask questions, clarify what was meant, and consider together which other perspectives, conditions, or solutions may matter.