



# **Project 2eASD Professional Learning Video Module Viewer's Guide**

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[giftedasd.project.uconn.edu](http://giftedasd.project.uconn.edu)

# Recommended Activities



**Before viewing:** Familiarize yourself with the “Background Information” and “Focal Points” as the content in the film may include new material.

**During viewing:** Look for evidence of the “Themes” in the modules, taking notes about your thoughts and ideas for discussions later. Also, consider the open-ended “Discussion Questions” and make note of any questions that may emerge.

**After viewing:** Consider your follow-up experience, including participating in discussion groups, exploring topics of interest, and incorporating this information into your own teaching practices. We have included different tools in the appendices that you can adapt and modify to fit the needs of your individual students.

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# Background Information

There are three themes to keep in mind when supporting 2eASD students in the transition to college. Ultimately, educators should create ways to:

1. Help students understand what it means to be 2eASD.
2. Work with students to identify and further develop their strengths, as well as recognize and create supports to address their needs, this is known as dual differentiation.
3. Use teaching strategies to help students create opportunities to develop their talents, self-advocacy, and self-regulation skills.



## **What it Means to be a Student who is Twice-Exceptional with Autism (2eASD)**

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Twice-exceptional (2e) learners are students who demonstrate the potential for high achievement or creative productivity in one or more domains such as math, science, technology, the social arts, visual, spatial, or performing arts, or other areas of human productivity AND who manifest one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria. These disabilities include specific learning disabilities; speech and language disorders; emotional/behavioral disorders; physical disabilities; autism spectrum disorders (ASD); or other health impairments, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These disabilities and high abilities combine to produce a unique population of students who may fail to demonstrate either high academic performance or specific disabilities. Their gifts may mask their disabilities and their disabilities may mask their gifts (Reis et al., 2014, p. 222).

Twice-exceptional students with autism (2eASD) tend to perform exceptionally well in one or several academic domains, while also meeting the federal or state diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder. These students can be intellectually gifted, especially in their domains of interest – and capable of attending and succeeding in postsecondary education. On the other hand, they may require support in areas of their lives that can, potentially, negatively impact their academic potential. For example, a 2eASD high school sophomore may have the ability to achieve an A in an advanced statistics course taken virtually through a local community college in addition to high school studies. At the same time, however, this same student may be at risk for failing two high school courses because this 2eASD student is resistant towards participating with classmates in the group projects required for their English and physics classes.

### ***What can you do to help students learn about being 2eASD?***

Suggestions:

- Teach students about asynchronous development and the resulting behaviors.
- Identify individual profiles of strengths and weaknesses to help them better understand themselves.



## **Asynchronous Development**

2eASD students may develop outside of age-level norms and unevenly across cognitive, emotional, and physical skill levels. They may have significant variations in their academic and/or social profile; for example, they may be advanced in one or more intellectual areas, but may experience challenges in social and/or fine motor skills. It is important for educators to recognize “one size does not fit all” and to meet students where they are.

### ***What can you do to support 2eASD students with asynchronous development?***

Suggestions:

- Do not set age-appropriate expectations and goals. Rather consider a growth model.
- Create opportunities for students to spend time with multiple peer groups including like-minded or interest peers, mental age matches, and cognitive ability matches.
- Have students read books with main characters with uneven development.
- Teach strategies such as self-advocacy, mindfulness, and mind-body exercises to address possible anxiety, stress, and misunderstandings that can result from being out of sync with others.

## **Dual Differentiation**

2eASD students will need specific types of support and help to succeed academically and socially in secondary school and, if they desire, competitive colleges. It is important to support the duality of these students with curriculum and activities that simultaneously accommodate their gifts/talents and allow them to compensate for their areas of weakness (Baum et al., 2001). 2e students require differentiated instruction, curricular and instructional accommodations and/or modifications, direct

services, specialized instruction, acceleration options, and opportunities for talent development that incorporate the effects of their dual diagnosis.

## **Addressing Areas of Strength**

2eASD students can demonstrate talents in various academic and nonacademic areas including: math, science, technology, the social arts, the visual, spatial, or performing arts, or other areas of human productivity (Reis et al., 2014). According to data from interviews that we conducted with 40 2eASD college students, they have used the following methods to identify their area of interest and strength:

- taking a variety of courses, including advanced courses
- participating in extracurricular activities
- working on class projects

The students reported increased motivation, social skills, extra-curricular involvement, academic performance, and self-advocacy – all of which have been identified as domains related to success in postsecondary education – when working on projects, assignments, and activities that align with their areas of interest.

## ***What can you do to help 2eASD students identify their areas of strength/interest?***

Suggestions:

- Use an interest inventory to identify students' interests.
- Offer opportunities for students to take advanced coursework.
- Work with students to create measurable IEP goals related to participating in extracurricular activities (Example: In the (semester) of 20–, (Student name) will participate in one extracurricular activity of their choice. Note: For a student who is still finding their interest areas, you may leave the activity open to choice, or create a goal of exploring two or more clubs/activities. If the student has already identified an interest area, make the goal specific to indicate their preference.).
- Provide students with opportunities to creatively complete class projects, instead of requiring projects to be completed in one format (e.g., essay).
- Seek out mentors in students' talent areas or find appropriate internships.

## **Addressing Areas of Need or Weakness**

2eASD students' areas of need align with those of other students with ASD, which include difficulty with social interaction, communication, and restricted repetitive behaviors and/or interests. Other common areas of need related to the transition to college for 2eASD students include difficulties with:

- executive functioning

- mental health
- motivation to complete coursework unrelated to their interests

**What can you do to help 2eASD students identify and address their areas of need?**

Suggestions:

- Promote their participation in Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meetings, and ensure that they understand their IEP.
- To assess learning progress, measure students’ growth over time rather than grade-level expectations.



**Providing Opportunities for Student Success**

The most common factors leading to success in college identified by 2eASD students include:

- Learning how to **deal with challenge** in advanced content classes.
- Identifying a **touch point** (or persons) on campus whom students can turn to for early planning, ongoing advice, and troubleshooting (e.g., mentors, friends, disability services professional, academic advisor, or mental health professional).
- Developing **strong social skills**, interacting with peers on topics through participation in extracurricular activities and groups related to their interests.
- Learning **strong self-management skills**, including personal organization and time management, planning ahead, prioritizing, breaking down long tasks or “chunking”, and setting and holding to personal schedules.
- Improving **self-advocacy skills**, which are crucial to requesting and receiving accommodations.
- Accessing **supports** (both disability-specific and those available to the general population), which positively impacts student outcomes. For example, accommodations allow students to demonstrate their true understanding of course content, rather than just the impact of their disability.
- Increasing **motivation** occurs when students are able to engage in topics related to their specific interests and/or when their interests guide their learning. This motivation can enable students to work for long periods of time and flourish academically.

## ***What can you do to help 2eASD students enter college prepared for success?***

Suggestions:

- Teach students how to identify a touch point in high school.
- Help students get involved in group extra-curricular activities and projects related to their interests in high school to promote social skills development.
- Create measurable IEP goals related to the areas of self-management where they need improvement.
- Promote self-advocacy at IEP meetings. Support students in identifying and creating their own measurable IEP goals, work towards the students leading their IEP meetings.
- Ensure that students are familiar with the accommodations and modifications they receive through their IEP, work with them to reflect on their supports, and identify the supports they will need in college.
- Review the steps necessary to receive supports in college.



# Focal Points

The film itself is approximately 53 minutes in total, however, we have broken it into five parts for viewers to pause, reflect, and review specific themes and information covered.

## Identification



2e students require comprehensive assessment in both areas of giftedness and disabilities, as one does not preclude the other. Professionals from both disciplines should conduct assessments for identification. When at all possible, those with knowledge about twice exceptionalities should participate in identification to address the impact of co-incidence/co-morbidity of both areas on diagnostic assessments and eligibility requirements.



“Twice-exceptional students require an individual education plan (IEP) or 504 accommodation plan with goals and strategies that enable them to achieve at a level and rate commensurate with their abilities. This comprehensive education plan must include talent development goals, as well as compensation skills and strategies to address their disabilities and their social and emotional needs” (Reis et al., 2014, p. 223).

## Strength-based Strategies that Contributed to the Academic Success of Our Participants



Being identified as both academically talented and having ASD, understanding their individual profile of strengths and weaknesses.



Having educators identify, validate, and focus on their strengths while supporting their challenges (dual differentiation).



Receiving access to challenging and advanced classes, internships, independent studies, and passion projects.



Participating in interest-based extracurricular activities.



Attending residential programs or camps helped prepare them for living away from home.



Learning to develop a positive relationship with teachers, counselors, and other students.



Exploring which executive function strategies works best for them.



Having a safe and supportive school environment.

## **Preparing for Academic Success**



Active involvement in the college transition process.



Support for and practice of self-determination, self-advocacy, and executive function skills.



Provide information to help students understand the college application process.



Have and understand the up-to-date documentation of disability paperwork.



Investigate and select post secondary opportunities and programs that offer majors or concentrations that align to that student' intense interest areas, passions, or career goals.



Consider of the appropriateness of and preference for the postsecondary setting (i.e., settings that are close to family or not, smaller versus larger, urban or suburban). Some students start at a community or smaller college before transferring to a larger college while others go directly to larger universities, it is an individual journey.



Consider accessing college support services. What generalized support such as tutoring or learning centers are available? What programs and services does the institution's office of accessibility services offer? What programs are offered at an additional cost?

## **Navigating College Life**



Choose classes, majors, and careers that align with passions and interests.



Understand how and when to access disability services.



Identify how to interact with and reach out to professors.



Be proactive in finding supports and resources, finding a touch point, or a trusted person, on campus as early as possible.



Participate in extracurricular activities and clubs, as they are great places to socialize and find people with like-minds and interests.



Try to be authentic in your relationships.



Learn what works best for self-care and recharging when feeling overwhelmed.

## Discussion Questions

1. What unique strengths and/or challenges of the students did you observe? How might they have been recognized or missed in the classroom setting?
2. What were some of the high school experiences these students mentioned that helped them prepare for college? How might you use this information to help students that are 2eASD in your school?
3. Based on the video module, what are some ways you can help develop self-determination and self-advocacy skills in your students?
4. What are some ways you can help students align their strengths and interests with a potential career or college major?
5. What can educators and parents do to help high school students who are 2eASD prepare for the social aspects of college?

6. Based on what you learned from these students' experiences, what are some positive interventions you are already implementing to help this group of students? What are some areas you can improve on?
7. Thinking about the students' experiences in the video module, how can middle school teachers and counselors help prepare 2eASD students for high school?
8. Think about a situation when you may encounter a student exhibiting difficult behaviors; Were they receiving proper support and learning experiences? What steps can you take to ensure the students' needs are being met?
9. How can high schools provide opportunities for students who are 2eASD to practice independent living in high school? How can the high school experience enhance students' executive functioning skills?

## Additional Resources

**Asynchronous Development**- National Association for Gifted Children [Asynchronous Development | National Association for Gifted Children](https://bit.ly/48EVoGg) <https://bit.ly/48EVoGg>

**Celebrating diversity: Gifts come in different packages** (PowerPoint) [Understanding differences- Gifts come in different packages.pptx](https://bit.ly/43Kq1Yb) <https://bit.ly/43Kq1Yb>

**College Application Process** (PowerPoint) [College Application Process.pptx](https://bit.ly/3rRcUa3)  
<https://bit.ly/3rRcUa3>

**College Services for Students with Disabilities** (PowerPoint) [College Services Worksheets.docx](https://bit.ly/3YcYVrw) <https://bit.ly/3YcYVrw>

**College Services Worksheets** [College Services Worksheets.docx](#)

<https://bit.ly/3DweVuV>

**How is peanut butter like laughter? Creative thinking Strategies** (PowerPoint) [How](#)

[is peanut butter like 7-up.pptx](#)

<https://bit.ly/3QfOPEi>

**Secondary Interest Inventory for Identifying Strengths and Interests** [2eASD](#)

[Secondary Interest Inventory.docx](#)

<https://bit.ly/3O91Cpk>

**Talent Development, Interest-finding, and Strength-based Learning** (PowerPoint)

[2e.ASD.Total Talent Portfolio.pptx](#)

<https://bit.ly/44XFZPz>

**Total Talent Portfolio on Padlet**

[https://padlet.com/juliedelgado713/total\\_talent\\_portfolio](https://padlet.com/juliedelgado713/total_talent_portfolio)

<https://bit.ly/43E1V0V>

**Who are 2E students?** (PowerPoint) [Who are 2E students.pptx](#)

<https://bit.ly/3Od206g>