

GETTING STUDENTS WRITING

HOW TO SUPPORT TWICE EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS AND OTHER RELUCTANT WRITERS

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Agenda

- ◆ Twice exceptional & neurodiversity
- ◆ Strengths & spiky profiles
- ◆ Do they have to write?
- ◆ Root cause informs supports
- ◆ 5 causes of writing challenges
 - ◆ Root cause
 - ◆ Clues
 - ◆ Interventions
 - ◆ Accommodations
 - ◆ Supports & strategies

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Who are twice-exceptional (2e) students?

Highly capable **AND** a disability, learning difference, mental health issue, or other challenge

“...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)

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Neurodiversity, another lens on 2e

- ◆ Neurodiversity is not just about autism
- ◆ Every brain is unique, like a fingerprint (Valizadeh et al., 2018)
- ◆ 2e students' brains are neurodiverse
- ◆ Patterns of strengths and challenges
- ◆ Respect individual differences

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Adults don't have to be great at everything

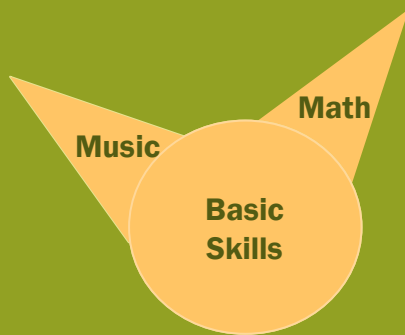


Adult careers will focus on **STRENGTHS**

“Niche” environments that support or eliminate weaknesses
(Armstrong, 2012)

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Spiky Strengths



Well-Rounded

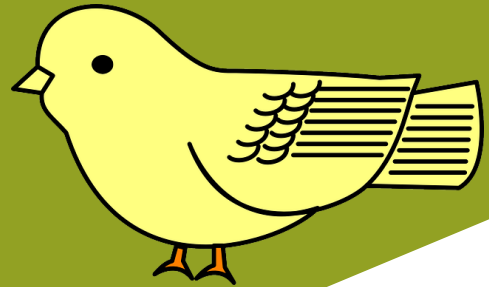


Colleges are looking for “spiky” applicants!

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Writing is hard for many

- ◆ Reluctant writers are the canary in the coal mine
- ◆ Some kids will **NEED** supports, but other students with hidden needs will benefit too
- ◆ Writing is a complex, multi-layered skill



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Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- ◆ Make ALL learning accessible to ALL students
- ◆ Provide accommodations & supports to ALL students
 - ◆ Keyboarding, dictation, spellcheck, ...
 - ◆ Just like a pencil
- ◆ 2e students think accommodations are “cheating” if they are the only ones allowed to use them
- ◆ Many other students will also benefit

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First, do they have to write?

“Don’t turn everything into a secret language arts lesson.”

– Dr. Susan Baum
Bridges Academy
The 2e Center

What is the learning objective?

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Demonstrating mastery via strengths

- ◆ Draw a diagram
- ◆ Make a poster
- ◆ Create a slide presentation
- ◆ Draw a comic strip
- ◆ Record a podcast
- ◆ Make a video
- ◆ Build a model
- ◆ Give choices...

Flexible assignments

Encourage creativity

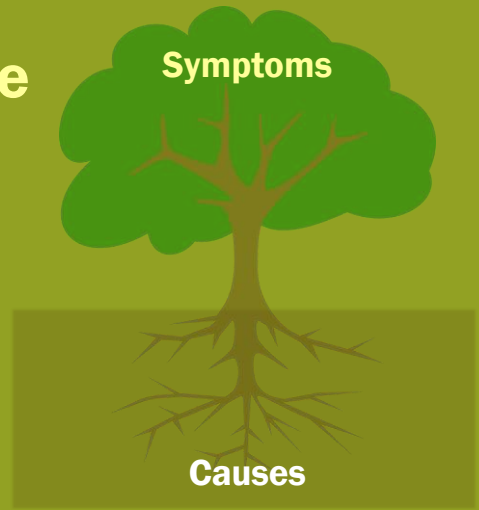
Build on student strengths

**The point is communication
of ideas**

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Look for the Root Cause

- ◆ Several possible causes of writing challenges
- ◆ Supports and strategies are **DIFFERENT** depending on the cause
- ◆ Applying an ineffective support causes frustration



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Avoids writing Poor spelling Slow (but very neat) handwriting
 Trouble with grammar, punctuation, capitalization Illegible handwriting
 Hard to get ideas out Trouble organizing ideas
 Hand hurts when writing Poor pencil grip Errors when copying
 Inconsistent letter formation Low written output
 Run-on sentences "Drawing" letters one stroke at a time

Fine Motor/Muscular

1

4

Stealth Dyslexia

Automaticity

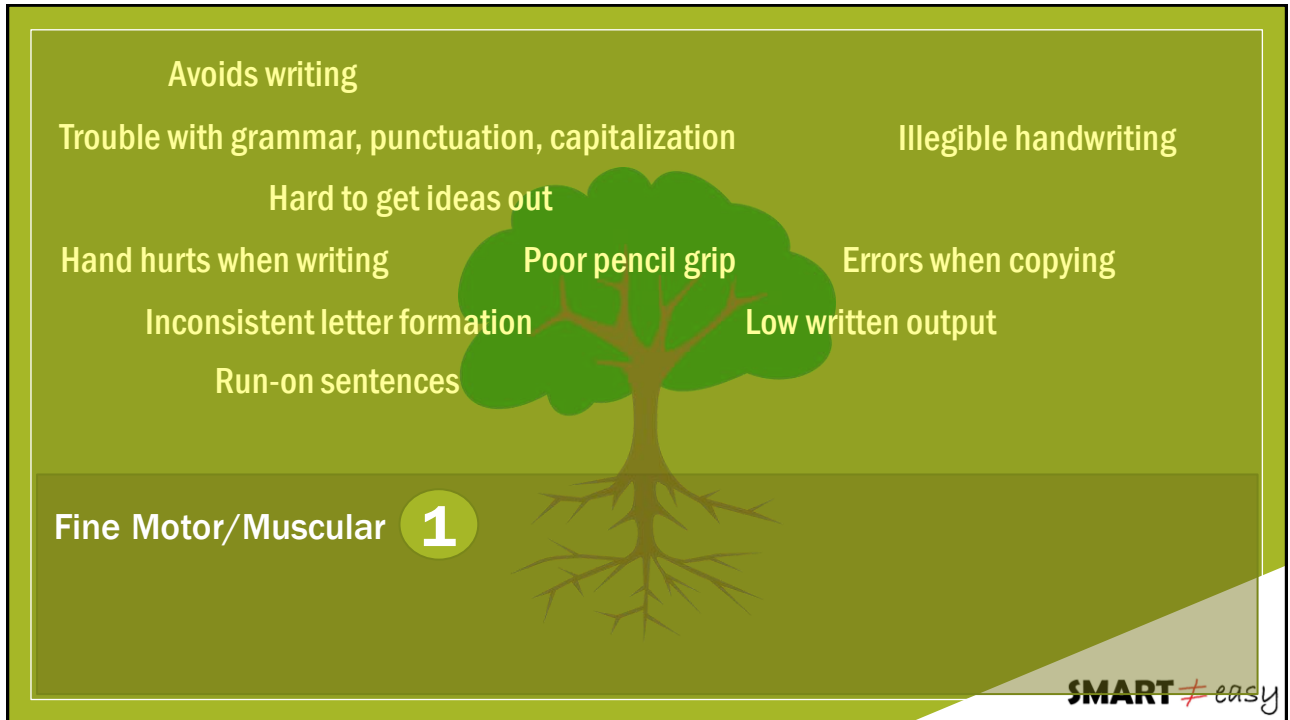
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Vision Processing

5

ADHD/Executive Function

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1 Fine Motor/Muscular – Root Cause

- ◆ Small muscles
- ◆ Big muscles
- ◆ Core/trunk muscles
- ◆ Stamina
- ◆ Coordination

Clues

“My hand hurts”

Unusual pencil grip

Posture/wriggling

ALSO trouble with drawing and crafts

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1 Fine Motor/Muscular – How to Help

- ◆ Occupational therapy
- ◆ Tiny crayons/chalk
- ◆ Playdoh/clay
- ◆ Pencil grip devices
- ◆ Perler beads

After middle elementary,
switch to keyboarding or
dictation



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Avoids writing

Poor spelling

Slow (but very neat) handwriting

Trouble with grammar, punctuation, capitalization

Illegible handwriting

Hand hurts when writing

Poor pencil grip

Errors when copying

Inconsistent letter formation

Low written output

“Drawing” letters one stroke at a time

Automaticity **2**

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2 Automaticity – Root Cause

- ◆ Brain-based automaticity of letter formation
- ◆ “Muscle memory” for letters and numbers
- ◆ Should be automatic by 2nd or 3rd grade

Clues

Unusual letter strokes

Letters on the same page look different

Messy handwriting

OR Very neat (but very slow)

“Drawing” each letter

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2 Automaticity – How to Help

- ◆ Lazy 8 Exercise [Video](#)



- ◆ Arrowsmith Program “Word & Tracing”

Need a LOT of repetition

After middle elementary, switch to keyboarding or dictation

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Assistive Technology

- ◆ Enable higher order thinking without getting bogged down in the mechanics
- ◆ Keyboarding/Dictation/Scribe
- ◆ Spellcheck
- ◆ Grammar tools/Grammarly
- ◆ SnapType app in iPad/iPhone

What Has the Superhero Done Lately?
Regular Past Tense Verbs

Directions: The superhero has been busy! Fill in each blank with a verb from the word bank. Don't forget to change it to past tense!

dance climb carry chase jump laugh

I jumped over a tall building to catch a thief.

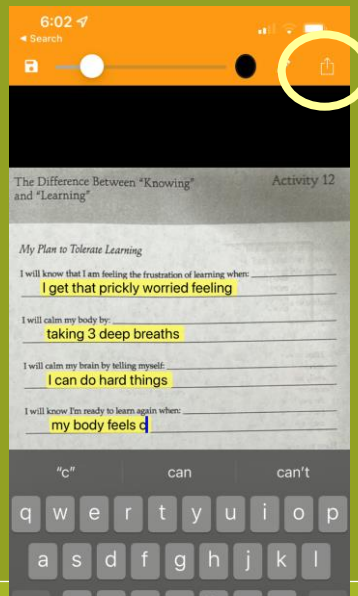
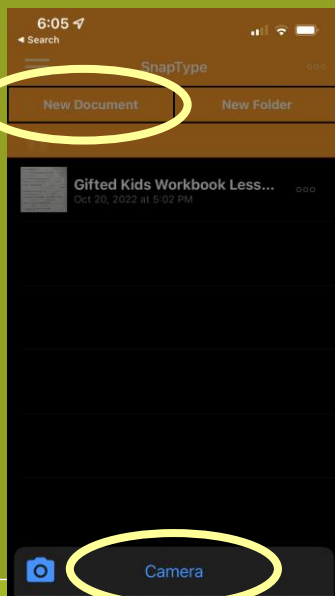
I _____ up a tree to rescue a kitty.

I _____ a bad guy out of town.

I _____ a hurt boy to the hospital.

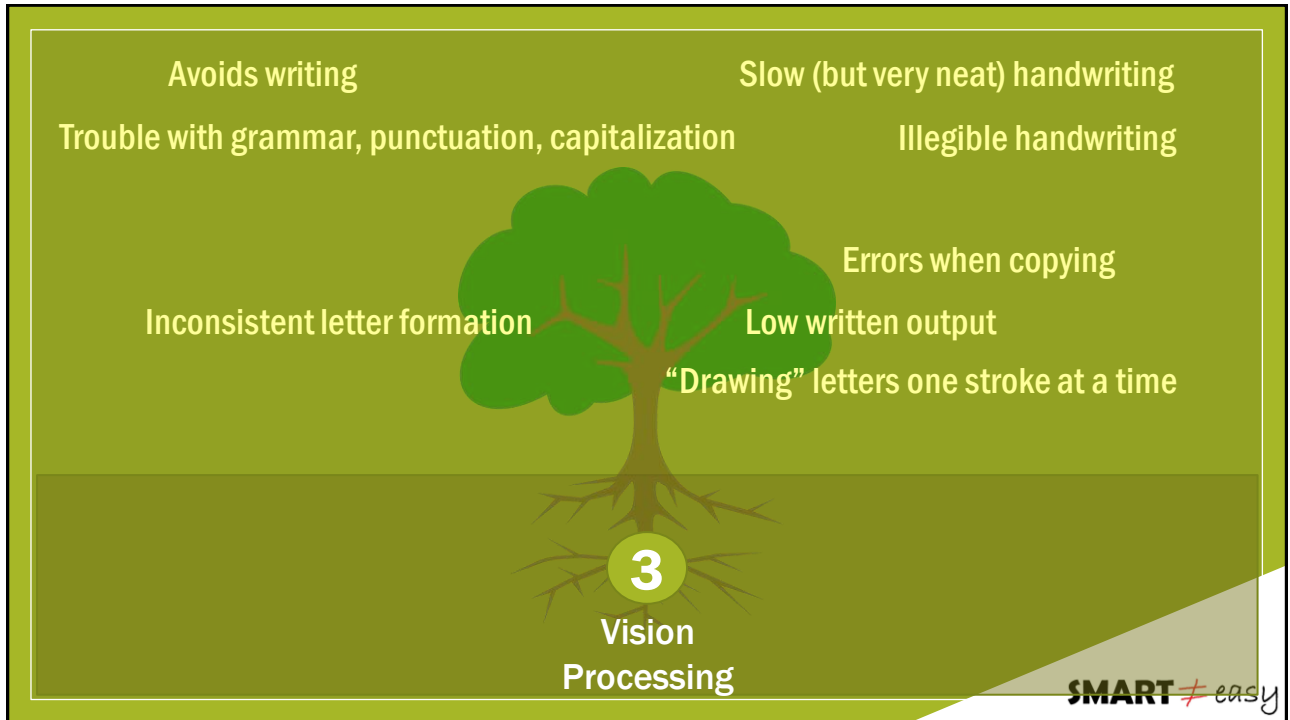
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Let's Try: SnapType



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3 Vision Processing Disorders – Root Cause

- ◆ Brain-based
- ◆ Eyes working together
- ◆ Focusing and refocusing
- ◆ Trouble with 3D perception
- ◆ Intermittent blurriness
- ◆ Letters/words can move/flip

Clues

- Trouble copying writing
- Capitalization/punctuation
- Silly mistakes in math (+ -)
- Inconsistent scores on standardized tests
- Resists smaller fonts
- Clumsy/sports

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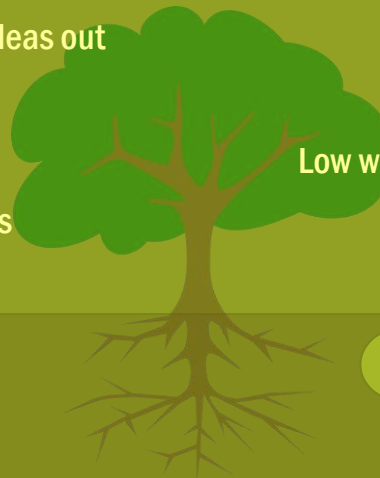
3 Vision Processing Disorders – How to Help

- ◆ Vision Therapy, www.covd.org (look for FCOVD)
 - ◆ Alderwood Vision Therapy
- ◆ Large fonts
 - ◆ eReaders
 - ◆ Photocopy onto 11x17
- ◆ Preferential seating
- ◆ Slant board
- ◆ Reading guide strips
- ◆ Math: $\frac{1}{2}$ " graph paper, turn notebook sideways



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Avoids writing Poor spelling Slow (but very neat) handwriting
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 Hard to get ideas out
 Errors when copying
 Low written output
 Run-on sentences



4 Stealth Dyslexia

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4 Stealth Dyslexia – Root Cause

◆ Phonological awareness

◆ Reads everything as a sight word

◆ Word → sounds → spelling

◆ Orthographic

◆ Deep comprehension elements

Clues

SPELLING

Rhyming/Wordplay

Can't sound out words

Substitutes words

Low scores on

Spelling tests

How to screen?

www.thepasttest.com

Oral manipulation of sounds

Reading nonsense words

Trouble rhyming “harder” words

(DIBELS may not catch them)

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4 Stealth Dyslexia – How to Help

◆ Structured literacy

◆ Phonics & phonological awareness

◆ Wilson, Heggerty, Sonday, 95 Group, etc.

◆ Dyslexia tutoring (wabida.org)

◆ Orton-Gillingham, Barton, All about Reading/Spelling

◆ Wired for Reading

◆ Lindamood-Bell

◆ Online reinforcement

◆ treasurehunt.prenda.co, nesy.com

◆ Audiobooks - LearningAlly, Bookshare, Speechify

◆ Typing with spellcheck, or dictation

Don't Wait

Intervention in 1st or 2nd grade is twice as effective as intervention in 3rd grade (Lovett et al., 2017)

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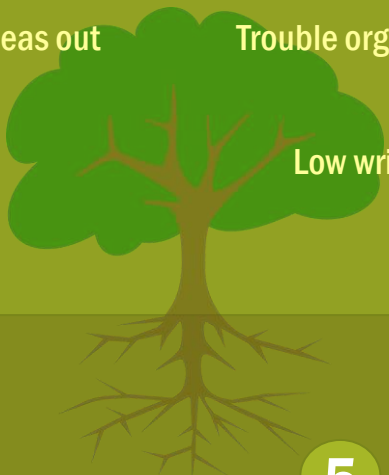
Avoids writing

Trouble with grammar, punctuation, capitalization

Hard to get ideas out

Trouble organizing ideas

Low written output



5 ADHD/Executive Function

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5 ADHD/Exec. Function – Root Cause

- ◆ Not a lack of attention, but trouble regulating attention
- ◆ Can focus when:
 - ◆ Novel
 - ◆ Interesting
 - ◆ Challenging
 - ◆ Urgent
(see Jessica McCabe)
- ◆ NOT: rote, boring, easy, even if very important
- ◆ Perfectionism makes it harder

Clues

- Trouble getting started
- Trouble staying on task
- Time management
- Breaking down big projects

Can produce when interested in the topic

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5 ADHD/Exec. Function – How to Help

- ◆ Something unusual to spark excitement
- ◆ Align with interests
- ◆ Give choice in topics, formats
- ◆ Authentic projects for real audiences
- ◆ Make it more complex or more challenging
- ◆ Create time pressure (sometimes)

Novel - Interesting - Challenging - Urgent

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This is a tough transition



Lots of interconnected ideas in brain



First, ●. Then ●, ●, and ●.
●. ●. ● because ●.

Linear writing, one word at a time

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How to Help

1. Get ideas out of brain in a messy way
2. THEN organize where you can see it

How?

- ◆ Sticky notes
- ◆ Mind map
- ◆ Drawing
- ◆ Dictation
- ◆ Scribing
- ◆ Walk & talk

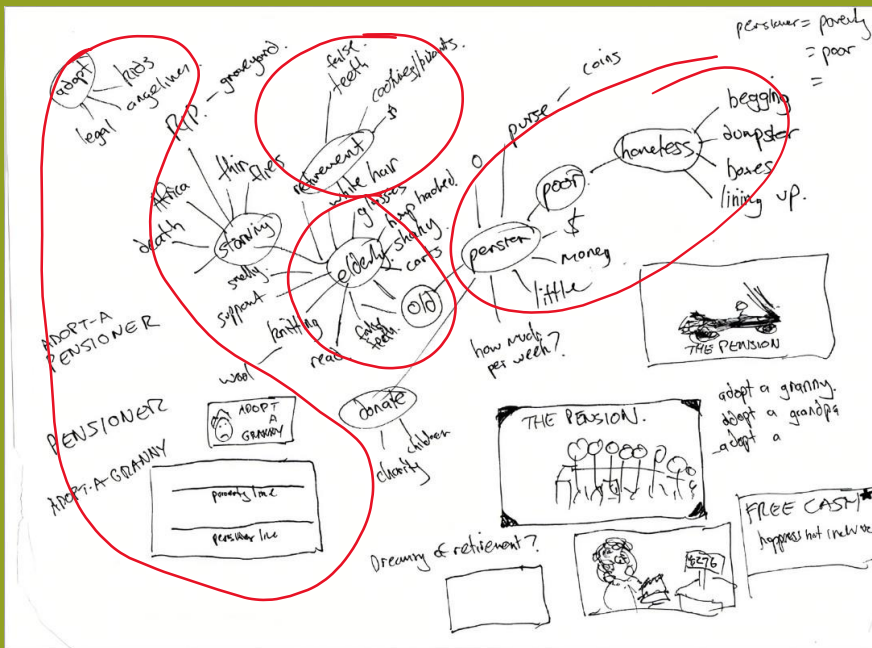
Topic/paragraph graphic organizers **WON'T HELP**

Why? They impose order too soon

Help each student find what works for them

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Mind Map



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Let's Try: Sticky Note Braindump

- ◆ Work alone or with a partner
- ◆ Brainstorm ideas you might put in your essay
- ◆ Write each idea on a different sticky note

Essay topic: planning a vacation

- ◆ Now, organize those sticky notes into “paragraphs”

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