

FROM THE EDITOR

The Twice-Exceptional Child



All parents think their children are exceptional. One of mine is twice exceptional.

My oldest daughter has been diagnosed with ADHD and bipolar disorder. She also has been classified as gifted. Due to the disability, her IQ can fluctuate as much as 40 points, depending on whether she's manic, not manic, depressed, not depressed, or some combination of the above. Accepted into the gifted program in third grade, she now is taking a basic skills class in seventh.

My daughter's journey through the public schools—with its myriad stops, starts, 504s and ultimately an IEP—makes this issue particularly personal for me. In this month's report on special education, we take a look at some of the challenges schools face in educating students with special needs, starting with Senior Editor Lawrence Hardy's story on "The Twice-Exceptional Child."

The story illustrates how one school district—not my daughter's—is helping children with this dual diagnosis succeed despite some difficult odds. In it, he quotes Rich Weinfeld, a former teacher who pioneered Montgomery County, Md.'s, twice-exceptional program in the 1980s.

Weinfeld notes that many gifted students with learning disabilities can perform near grade level, resulting in neither their giftedness nor their disability being diagnosed. Because the two are often at the extreme ends of the learning spectrum, one often masks the other.

My wife and I have been fortunate—and very forthcoming—with our daughter's schools about the issues she has. And we have been very lucky. Despite the occasional bureaucratic bump in the road, she has been largely supported by the teachers and administrators who genuinely want to understand her needs.

This is not always the case. If anything, Larry's story serves to reinforce that while providing reasons for everyone to try just a little harder.

The special report is just one piece of what I think is one of our best issues in some time, one that is fronted by Managing Editor Kathleen Vail's on-location look at Colorado's Adams 50 school district. Located just outside Denver, the 10,000-student district is taking an unusual step by eliminating one of public education's long-standing traditions—the grade level.

Adams 50's approach, which groups students according to ability rather than age, has not been tried on this scale before. Kathleen's story looks at how it was done as well as the challenges the district faces as it tries to move this effort up to the high school level.

We hope you enjoy this month's issue. Please give us feedback and let us know what we can do to help you do your jobs better.

Until next month ...

Glenn Cook, Editor-in-Chief