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Upcoming seminar will cover needs of gifted students with disabilities

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Jan 6, 2018

Understanding how to meet and advocate for a gifted student's academic needs can be daunting, but when that student also has a disability it can become much more challenging for teachers and parents.

“When this happens for children, if they are not appropriately instructed, they are probably performing at below average levels,” said Julia Roberts, the Mahurin Professor of Gifted Studies and the executive director of the Center for Gifted Studies and the Gatton Academy.

These students, known as twice-exceptional students, are the subject of an upcoming seminar hosted by the Center for Gifted Studies at Western Kentucky University.

The seminar will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m Jan. 24 at WKU's Knicely Conference Center. It's free and open to parents, teachers, students and school administrators interested in strategies and information on meeting the students' needs, according to a news release.

Online registration and more information are available at https://www.wku.edu/gifted/educators/twice_exceptional/index.php.

Twice-exceptional students get their name from being unique in having both an area of giftedness and one or more disabilities. Very often, the disability is a learning disability but it can also be an emotional or physical challenge, Roberts said.

When teachers don't understand how to meet these unique students' needs, Roberts said they don't perform at the high level their gifts allow.

"This is something that's very frustrating for parents because parents know what children can do at home or outside of school," she said.

Roberts said meeting the needs of twice-exceptional students often requires special education and classroom teachers working together across their silos.

"It's a matter of educating educators that you can be twice-exceptional," she said.



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Lois Baldwin, a national expert on twice-exceptional children, will be participating in this year's seminar.

Baldwin is the president and a founder of The Association for the Education of Gifted Underachieving Students.

Baldwin received her doctorate in gifted, special education and educational administration from Teachers College at Columbia University, according to the release.

Since its inception in 2011, Roberts said the seminar has been successful in drawing people with a stake in education for twice-exceptional children. Guests have driven from far away as 500 miles, she said.

“That’s how critical it is to parents,” she said.

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