

**ADHD Toolkit for Educators**

Interventions for the classroom K-12

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* Supporting Students
* ADHD Clues
* Winning Strategies
* Classroom Culture
* Collaborative Opportunities
* Cognitive Strategies
* Sensory Strategies
* Feedback
* Considerations and Resources
* References

Supporting Students with ADHD

Students with ADHD can do relatively well in elementary school but as they continue into middle school and high school, they will likely need additional supports.



Students with ADHD often have fine-motor challenges, struggle with executive functioning as well as regulating their attention between competing tasks.

**ADHD Clues**

ADHD is one of the most frequently diagnosed conditions in children. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

Children with ADHD ***frequently*** exhibit behavioral clues, such as:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Inattention** |  | **Hyperactivity/Impulsivity** |
| Struggling to pay attention to details and/or direction |  | Fidgeting, taps hands or feet, seems incapable of sitting still |
| Struggling to focus during long tasks |  | Leaving seat to move around when expected to remain seated (mid-instruction) |
| Does not seem to listen (absent-minded) |  | Unable to do tasks or fun activities quietly |
| Struggling to finish tasks once they have been started |  | Talking excessively |
| Chronic disorganization |  | Answering questions before they have been completed |
| Avoiding tasks that involve lengthy mental focus |  | Has difficulty waiting their turn in line |
| Frequently losing track of things (homework, library books, calculator, id card) |  | Interrupting or intruding on others |
| Easily distracted and forgetful |  | Making hasty decisions without regard for consequences |

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Because it is challenging for children with ADHD to manage their behavior consistently, they are at greater risk of academic, social & emotional frustration.

Winning Strategies in the Classroom

When a student struggles to…

Follow project directions:

1. Break down instructions into ordered, bite-sized chunks
2. Ask student to repeat instructions back
3. Demonstrate the project completed

Start/complete written assignments:

* Break down tasks into smaller steps
* Limit work on each page
* Reduce visual field by covering part of the page
* Provide extra time to complete the assignment
* Encourage frequent breaks
* Online, allow the student to use audio features to ‘write’

Get or stay organized:

* Stress routine & rituals
* Establish clear expectations around organization
* Encourage use of only 1 calendar for assignments
* Place a sticky note on student’s desk of daily activities & supplies required to complete homework
* Encourage student to adhere to end-times of tasks
* Provide student with color/image-coded folders or binders
* Maintain & model a well-organized classroom
* Provide extra (electronic) books to reduce interruption if they happen to forget them
* Assign a peer to help student establish & maintain organizational structure

Classroom Culture

Classroom culture matters; it can either support or create challenges to the student’s success. (Piffner, 2011)

Take the Time

A student can blossom if even one teacher takes a little extra time to create a warm & caring relationship with them.

*Be the teacher who takes time.* Time you invest now can change the trajectory of that child’s life for the better and set them up for future success.

Peer Tutoring

Students with ADHD usually struggle with drill & practice assignments due to the repetitive nature. Students with and without attention difficulties and impulsivity should be considered for peer tutoring partnerships.

*Peer tutoring* may contribute to the difference between success & failure in the classroom, but tutors will need to be prepared. Peer tutoring is particularly effective when the tutoring student is provided with adequate training.

(Piffner, 2011)

It is imperative that the tutor be adequately prepared with materials & information on how to properly give appropriate feedback to their assigned student (Greenwood & Delquadri, 1995).

Collaborative Opportunities



Group Work: When a student feels like he is a part of something bigger than himself, he is more likely to show up, literally & figuratively. Ensure that rules are crystal clear & not subject to misinterpretation. Strategies that create group sharing will likely create the most environmental rewards.

Shared Work: Taking turns reading or math partner will increase the chances of comprehension and reward impulse control.

Independent Work: Give the students a legend to check their answers as well as their neighbor’s answers.

Manipulative Tools: Allow the student to have a small ball to roll back & forth on his thigh during concentration…with ‘no throwing the ball’ rules of course ☺

Gamify: Use games that reinforce academic skills and increase difficulty in small steps. Computer learning games are doubly reinforcing.

Family Matter: Create an open communication platform via Email (or other platform) to work with the student’s parents or guardians to ensure continuity in the collaboration to increase the student’s chances of success. This will also create a way for parents/guardians to reinforce skills at home during homework/study time.

Sensory Cues: Having a visual/auditory cue to transition.

Physical Location: Place student away from potential environment distractions and next to engaged students. If the student is disruptive, allow them to move their desk to less disruptive location and allow the student to occasionally stand and touch their desk as long as they are doing their work.

Cognitive Strategies

Decision-making: Working with students to determine triggers will create awareness and accountability to better manage behavioral clues. Giving the student choices also encourages independent thinking and decision-making.

Visual & Environmental Prompts: Whiteboard (short) animation is a highly effective method to transfer knowledge to a student with ADHD.



The brain loves images. For students with ADHD, images & brief videos will very likely capture & hold their attention.

Manage Expectations: Ensure students understand what they are aiming for with task completion by showing a picture of the completed task.

Sensory Strategies



Timer: Have the student set a timer to complete their projects. It will provide a sense of independence & improve task management skills.

Metronome: Have the student use earphones and a (free) metronome application on his smartphone. For more information on this powerful tool, visit <http://www.afocusedbrain.com>

Music: Play different types of music for different activities. All students can benefit from this, given our bodies are naturally rhythmic. For example, using quiet classical music for individual learning activities helps block distractions and creates a calm classroom environment (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Heart Rate Up: Leverage post-recess time to have the student immediately sit down & concentrate. You will notice an increased ability to focus with an elevated heart rate.

Feedback

Rapid Feedback: Students with ADHD blossom when provided instant & specific feedback from their teacher.

When teachers are specifically encourage students for desired behaviors, they can engage students before their attention drifts while highlighting desired behavior.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2006)

Effective praise statements: (a) are contingent on the demonstration of desired behavior, (b) specifically describe the desired/positive behavior, and (c) are provided immediately and enthusiastically following the desired behavior.

(Scheuermann & Hall, in press)

Careful with Criticism: Avoid shaming a student; it’s ALWAYS toxic.

Redirection: This is a common theme with ADHD and can feel frustrating but when done with empathy & a sincere desire for the student to learn the material, it may be easier to redirect.

Bite-size Chunks: Baby steps are easiest, given attentional issues with ADHD; reward frequently.

Home-School Considerations: Collaboration with the parents/guardians is an essential component to the student’s best chance for successful comprehension. (Grosser, 2015)

Keep it simple by providing a brief checklist for the parent/ guardian. If email is not an option, provide them with a phone number and a window of time where you can connect weekly.

⚠️CAUTIOUS Considerations….

Educators & Counselors are encouraged to discuss observed patterns of behavior with parents/ guardians but please ALWAYS REFRAIN from suggesting medical or mental health disorders, like ADHD.

Parents fear that the moment their child tests positive for ADHD, that the child will be put on medication. Although medications are sometimes part of the treatment plan for students with ADHD, there are also a number of alternative and non-medication treatments, such as NeuroFeedback, Acupuncture, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

A professional ADHD Assessment is necessary because ADHD can be difficult to diagnose. Ruling out other diagnoses helps to manage outcome expectations. A thorough assessment is comprised of an Objective Test & Clinical Interview.

For parents/guardians who want information and resources on ADHD, please direct them to their health care provider or one of the following locations:

FDA-CLEARED TESTING SITES IN TREASURE VALLEY:

* K-Counseling & Anxiety Treatment 208.258.3510 (Boise)
* Meridian Advanced Psychiatry 208.515-CARE (Meridian)

**References:**

* American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual for mental disorders (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/facts.html
* Greenwood, C. R., & Delquardri, J. (1995). Classwide peer tutoring and the prevention of school failure. Preventing School Failure, 39(4), 21-25.
* Grosser, D. (2015). T/TAC W&M, Updated July 2017
* Piffner, L. J. (2011). All about ADHD: The complete practical guide for classroom teachers (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Scholastic.
* Scheuermann, B. K., & Hall, J. A. (in press). Positive behavioral supports for the classroom (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. Considerations: ADHD
* U.S. Department of Education. (2006). Teaching children with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder: Instructional strategies and practices. Retrieved from www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep

Additional Resources:

<http://www.chadd.org>

<http://helpguide.org>

<http://verywellmind.com>

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