



Educator Handbook for ADHD



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WHAT IS ADHD?

ADHD is short for Attention Deficit Disorder with or without Hyperactivity. People who have been diagnosed with having ADHD may experience things such as:

- ▶ finding it hard to sit still
- ▶ being easily distracted
- ▶ having a hard time taking turns or playing quietly
- ▶ difficulty following instructions
- ▶ blurting out loud in class
- ▶ talking too much
- ▶ being forgetful and/or losing things
- ▶ experiencing poor social relations

WHAT CAUSES ADHD?

ADHD is caused by a neurological inefficiency in the area of the brain that controls impulses, aids in screening sensory input and focusing attention.

This means that ADHD:

- ▶ has a biological cause
- ▶ is not an excuse
- ▶ can be hereditary
- ▶ is no one's fault
- ▶ can be a disability if unaddressed

Children who have ADHD may seem to be unwilling to work, uncooperative, lazy or just plain stubborn. Learning about and understanding ADHD are the first steps to helping children cope successfully with their difficulties. Teachers are then able to put into place accommodations in their classrooms to facilitate greater school success.

ADHD BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS

There are three types of behaviours that characterize the child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder:

- ▶ Distractibility
- ▶ Hyperactivity
- ▶ Impulsivity

DISTRACTIBILITY

Distractibility is when a child has difficulty focusing for a period of time on something that requires mental effort. You may observe that he is easily distracted when he is doing his homework if there is other noise in the room. He may have difficulty screening out extraneous noise while focusing on what he is supposed to be doing.

HYPERACTIVITY

Hyperactivity is when a child appears to be in constant motion. She may be tapping her feet, swinging her legs or wiggling her body. She may get up and down during class or try to do several things at once. You might also observe her switching from one thing to the next without completing anything.

IMPULSIVITY

Impulsivity is characteristic of children who do not stop to think before they act. They may blurt out the answer to a teacher's question before the teacher finishes asking it, or they might interrupt when someone is speaking, not meaning to be inconsiderate. An impulsive child might hit another child when he gets frustrated without considering the consequences.

POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Spontaneous – Creative – Inquisitive – Forgiving – Warm Hearted
– Resilient – Risk Taker – Gregarious – Resourceful – Innovative
– Loyal – Sincere – Energetic – Intuitive – Trusting – Good Sense
of Humour

It is often easy to focus on the negative qualities of the child with ADHD. However, these qualities listed and many other qualities deserve prominent mention. You may see that these students are forgetful or fail to follow through with assignments and requests. You may see these students as disorganized or inattentive. However, all children have wonderful qualities if we take the time to see them. The challenge for teachers is how to turn that high activity level, inquisitive mind and sensitive nature into a productive and happy student while providing the necessary structure to assure individual success.

INEFFICIENT PROCESSING

Although most learners can succeed without being taught strategies, most children with ADHD CANNOT survive without them. ADHD students bounce from idea to idea, thought to thought. Allow time to think and process.

STRATEGY: Show the student the general information before working out the specifics. The ADHD student needs to see the big picture first.

Example: Stating the core standard prior to teaching specific objectives, or reading the Cliff Notes before reading the novel. All stimuli carry the same degree of importance.

STRATEGY: Intensify the stimulus.

Examples:

- ▶ Say it louder or softer.
- ▶ Use colour or size differences in print or use a highlighter.
- ▶ Colour coding red for math, green for science, etc.
- ▶ Use pictures in place of words or in addition to words.

ADHD students have a difficult time remembering concepts. You can help by reading into a tape recorder and allowing the student to listen. Use diagrams or pictorials for information that needs to be memorized. Use mnemonic strategies, make mental pictures of the information and/or put small bits of information on cards or manipulatives. The same information put on cards for matching and allowing students to work on the floor or in a non-traditional way makes a deeper impression on their minds.

It is also important to remember that ADHD students need to see their assignments written as well as heard. Their processing is not the same. Having a special place for written assignments on the board in colour coding is effective and saves the teacher from having to repeat.

Equal and Fair Are Not The Same

WHAT REALLY WORKS FOR THE ADHD STUDENT?

GETTING AND MAINTAINING ATTENTION

- ▶ Keep instructions simple.
- ▶ Allow freedom of movement in the room with a purpose.
- ▶ Use visual attention getters such as diagrams, objects, a different way...and COLOUR!
- ▶ Use a variety of auditory cues such as a bell, a softer voice, clap hands in a pattern, chimes, etc.
- ▶ Use coloured markers or chalk to emphasize key words.
- ▶ Present new material in small bits at a good pace.
- ▶ Notice and applaud positive on task behaviours.
- ▶ Make use of direct eye contact (the personal gaze) frequently.
- ▶ Allow students to self check as much as possible and help others.
- ▶ Allow students to mark their own progress on progress cards
- ▶ Allow students the right to work with a neighbour or friend as appropriate.
- ▶ Allow students the freedom of speech as it relates to their work.
- ▶ Tune in to the kind of noise students make when working. Call their attention to it so they can recognize it too (exception: the student is experiencing vocal tics).
- ▶ Teach attentive listening.
- ▶ Reduce assignments.
- ▶ Allow students the freedom to work where they can work best and in a position that works best as it makes sense.
- ▶ Use proximity control—touch or visual cues.

WHAT REALLY WORKS FOR THE ADHD STUDENT?

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- ▶ Post rules in a highly visual place and refer to them often (especially in the beginning).
- ▶ Teach clearly the routine and structure early in the year.
- ▶ Be firm, fair and friendly.
- ▶ Respect and treat students with dignity.
- ▶ Plan for transition times and prepare students for these and other changes that may interrupt your routine.
- ▶ Remember **ADHD students need immediate reinforcement!**
- ▶ Be consistent.
- ▶ Reminders can be affixed to the student's desk if needed.
- ▶ Set up signals with specific individuals ahead of time (eye contact and pulling on the ear may be a cue for the student to listen).
- ▶ Allow student to monitor their own behaviour by the use of coloured cue cards (i.e., green card – "I'm working.", blue card – "I'm finished.", red card – "I need help.")
- ▶ Have a place for finished products where students have the opportunity to get up and walk around.
- ▶ Use timers to help students move along at a faster pace.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for students to assume responsible roles (i.e., leader, teacher, librarian, etc.)
- ▶ Allow students to do their work on the computer vs. hand written work.

WHAT REALLY WORKS FOR THE ADHD STUDENT?

ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

- ▶ Call on volunteers only.
- ▶ Structure activities to allow students high response opportunities.
- ▶ Allow active participation.
- ▶ Use teacher silence – let the students talk more, work in groups, solve their own problems.
- ▶ Make use of cooperative learning to promote social skills and allow for more response time.
- ▶ Assign roles and responsibilities and allow children to manage themselves as much as possible.
- ▶ Do partner reading.
- ▶ Use manipulatives. Typically, ADHD children perform best when actively involved in the learning process.
- ▶ Use individual white/chalk boards for independent involvement.
- ▶ Allow students the opportunity to make mistakes or even fail.
- ▶ **Break tasks into small bits.** A cup only holds 8 oz.

WHAT REALLY WORKS FOR THE ADHD STUDENT?

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

- ▶ Binders, coloured folders and calendars are especially good for organizing class and homework. Students need to be trained in how to do that...do not assume they already know!
- ▶ Have a progress card or way to mark completed work.
- ▶ Use as many of the five senses as possible when helping them learn to organize their things. Colour; say it, they repeat it, they hear it twice; have a partner okay their records or assignments to make certain they are copied correctly.
- ▶ Use calendars especially for homework or long term assignments.
- ▶ Break the assignments up into small sections: (i.e. "By Friday you should have your outline completed. By the following Wednesday you should have your references for the first part.", etc.)
- ▶ Colour coded file folders are helpful in quick identification and ease in locating specific assignments (i.e. red = math, green = English, etc.)
- ▶ Make use of peer study buddies.
- ▶ Tape schedules on his/her desk.
- ▶ Make sure parents know how you plan to use the folders or binders and have them be responsible for checking them each day.

WHAT REALLY WORKS FOR THE ADHD STUDENT?

MULTISENSORY INSTRUCTION

- ▶ All directions and assignments should be given verbally and visually.
- ▶ Put drills to music or in rhythm.
- ▶ Allow students to use the computer instead of always writing their assignments.
- ▶ Use colour and design to help students visualize concepts.
- ▶ Use graph paper to help students line up their digits in doing math.
- ▶ Trace words and numbers on sandpaper or other rough surfaces.
- ▶ Have areas where the children can sit on the floor or bean bags for a change.
- ▶ Use carrels or privacy boards to create a "private office".
- ▶ Take time to sing or wiggle or exercise frequently in the day.
- ▶ Allow children to discover on their own.

WHAT REALLY WORKS FOR THE ADHD STUDENT?

MODIFY ASSIGNMENTS

- ▶ Allow students to take tests orally or have it read to them and have a scribe record their answers.
- ▶ Use peer tutors or tutor from another grade to help.
- ▶ Reduce the number of problems a student may have to: alternate rows, do odd or even number, etc.
- ▶ Prioritize. "That is the most important part of this assignment".
- ▶ Allow students to use learning aids such as tape recorders, reference charts, calculators, computers and spell checkers.
- ▶ Help students make mental pictures or visualization strategies.
- ▶ Assign small amounts of homework. If they can't get finished at school, they won't be able to get finished at home without a huge struggle.
- ▶ Remember...these kids cannot perform consistently!
- ▶ Give them a break once in a while.

WHAT REALLY WORKS FOR THE ADHD STUDENT?

TEAM APPROACH

- ▶ Parents, students and all the teachers that work with a particular student should be involved in goal setting and planning.
- ▶ The more involved the parents are, the greater the success.
- ▶ Keep an open mind and open door.
- ▶ Conference on a regular basis with student and parent to monitor progress.
- ▶ Keep parents notified of progress on a regular basis. When an ADHD student falls behind, it is a terrible and difficult task for him to catch up and equally hard on the parents.
- ▶ Listen with your heart and ears to what parents and students are saying to you.

WHAT REALLY WORKS FOR THE ADHD STUDENT?

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Keep supplies easily on hand for students to obtain.
- Keep a daily schedule posted and prepare students for upcoming changes in their day.
- Create a "student friendly" environment.
- Be firm consistently, but also loving. These children are often the hardest to love yet they need it the most.
- Be flexible...rigid things break in the wind!
- Maintain a structured environment while allowing for creativity.
- Perceptual abilities are typically a few years behind; maintain a psychological distance from the child's disruptive behaviour. Don't personalize their behaviour, and remember...
The behaviour is not the child!
- Be forgiving. They cannot always control what they say and do.

Use a lot of your own great ideas!

QUICK TIPS

MAINTAIN PROXIMITY – “Don’t sit down and don’t stop moving.” Close proximity allows behavioural correction without negative verbal comments. This is one of the most effective means of maintaining the child’s attention.

BODY AND SIGN LANGUAGE – A thumbs up, smile, nod of the head, twinkle in your eye or a wink can do so much for the ADHD child. Use your facial expressions and eye contact to convey your meaning. Students tend to pay more attention to what you do rather than what you say.

Teachers are great actors. Your facial expressions and eye contact can convey tremendous approval. Children are sensitive to non-verbal gestures and you can use the positive ones to your advantage while building the esteem of the student.

Never FORCE students to look at you when you are correcting them. If needed, you should take a time out.

Voice control is a critical management device! Try softening your voice and standing nearer the student for better results. Calm, softer and closer are better!

Any good teaching practice will work for a child with ADHD. Getting a student to write will usually calm him/her down. “I’m going to flash a word or phrase to you. See if you can write it down when I say go.”

ADHD STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- Opportunities to move around from class to class is beneficial for these students. They also need opportunities for movement in the classroom with a purpose or a short break at least every 20 minutes or so.
- Schedules should allow for alternate kinds of thinking and working. For example, start the day with metal or wood school class, then a core class such as math or English. Starting out with P.E. is not a good idea as these students do not wind down easily.
- Greater coordination of efforts for teachers, principals and parents is required. Teamwork is critical to integrate efforts at a secondary level.
- Assignments should be written in some kind of a planner. Students should have assignments showing visually at all times. Again, colour coding can be extremely valuable.
- Study Halls or Study Skills Classes with staff available for assistance will provide for closer tracking of students. These students need all the help they can get.
- Flexible grading is very important. Work with parents and students to arrange for the opportunity to feel success while setting and accomplishing goals; (i.e., Mark the number correct instead of the number wrong. Grade on the number correct out of the number completed rather than the number assigned.) These students cannot be expected to do three hours of homework that would take an average student one hour to do.

- Reduce the length of school days by providing "work release" or on the job training or even vocational training.
- ADHD students highly benefit from working with professionals as interns or apprentice students.
- Study Skills classes offered at the beginning or end of the day help these students learn organizational techniques which are so essential for them. Organization is not one of their strengths and they require a lot of training.
- A peer tutor or staff member can help keep track of their progress and assignments. They are also valuable as a resource for making sure the assignments are completed on time.
- Sometimes it helps to have a peer tutor or tracker to help the student get to the right class on time. Giving extra credit for being on time is an added incentive.
- Allowing them to use notes made by a more proficient student can alleviate the stress of trying to understand what is said while also trying to get it down on paper.
- Allowing tape recorders instead of taking notes is helpful, or give an outline of the lecture so that the student already has the main points and can just fill in the supporting details.
- Encourage the students to become efficient in word-processing. They're often very poor in penmanship.
- Give them a break by reducing the amount of homework!

- Teachers and staff must have a strong commitment to help students be successful. Teamwork, flexibility and providing alternatives allows for greater success!
- The more senses used in teaching, the more effective learning for an ADHD student. Hearing it, seeing it and saying it is three times as effective as just hearing it.
- Be creative, brief and use a variety of good teaching techniques.
- Transitions are difficult. Give notice of transitions; (i.e., "in five minutes we are going to hear what your group discussed.")
- Allow students to take the test orally, one on one, or some other accommodation that allows the student to demonstrate what he/she really has learned.
- Provide on-going staff in-service.
- Promote parental involvement.

WHERE TEACHERS CAN LEARN MORE

Websites of Interest

- ▶ www.adrn.org
- ▶ www.adhdnetwork.org
- ▶ www.adans.ns.ca
- ▶ www.ldac-taac.ca
- ▶ www.geocities.com/parents_helping_parents
- ▶ www.momsonamission.ca
- ▶ www.chaddcanada.org
- ▶ www.addsupport.org
- ▶ www.aqeta.qc.ca
- ▶ <http://panda.cyberquebec.com>
- ▶ <http://www.allkindsofminds.org/>
- ▶ www.nichq.org
- ▶ www.sandrarium.com

Books of Interest

- ▶ *How to Reach and Teach ADD/ADHD Children* by Sandra Rief
- ▶ *Attention Deficit Disorder Strategies for School-aged Children* by Clare B. Jones, Ph.D.
- ▶ *The Attention Deficit Disorder Interventions Manual* by Stephen McCarney
- ▶ *School Strategies for ADD Teens* by Kathleen Nadeu, Ellen Dixon and Susan Biggs

Videos of Interest

- ▶ "ADHD: What Can We Do?" by Russell Barkley
- ▶ "ADHD: What Do We Know?" by Russell Barkley
- ▶ "F.A.T. City Workshop—How Difficult Can this Be?" by Richard D. Lavoie
- ▶ "Learning Disabilities and Discipline with Richard Lavoie" by Richard D. Lavoie
- ▶ "Odd Kid Out" directed by Karen O'Donnell



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