



Intervening with AD/HD in the Classroom: Strategies for Teachers

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References:

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General Strategies

- Identify the child's unique/individual strengths and needs (e.g., Is the child hyperactive in certain settings or more distractible when s/he sits near certain peers?)
 - Consider academic and behavioral needs
 - Consider the settings/context of the behaviors
 - Utilize a multidisciplinary team when possible
 - Use formal diagnostic assessments and informal classroom observations (e.g., learning style inventories to build on strengths/abilities)
- Select appropriate educational practices

- To meet the academic and behavioral/emotional needs of the child
- Practices that gain the child's attention and are age appropriate
- Necessary accommodations of modifications in curriculum
- Integrate appropriate practices within an IEP (if child receives special ed. svcs.)
 - If not qualify for an IEP but has impairment, consider a 504 or other individualized plan to assist with learning and academic development.
 - IEP reflects annual goals and special education and other services to meet goals.
 - Plan how to integrate the classroom/educational activities with those used in IEP.

Academic Instruction

- Introduce, Conduct, and Conclude each lesson
- Introducing Lessons
 - Explain what you want the child to learn in the current lesson
 - Explain in the context of previous lessons
 - Summarize the order of activities planned (advance organizer)
 - Review previous lessons (on this topic)
 - Set learning expectations (what are they expected to learn)
 - Set behavioral expectations (describe how expected to behave)
 - Identify materials needed for lesson
 - Explain where they can find additional info. on the topic (e.g., text)
 - Simplify instructions, scheduling, choices (ensures comprehend and increases chance of them being on task and productive)
- Conducting Lessons
 - Provide structure and consistency – be predictable (minimal choices and rules, need to clearly understand expectations/consequences)
 - To decrease boredom and increase the pace, include a variety of activities and multisensory activities during lessons
 - Use audiovisual materials (overheads!!!)
 - Make lessons brief or break longer presentations into discrete segments

- Nonverbal cues – discreet, private cues to stay on task and advance warning they will be called upon shortly (avoid sarcasm/criticism)
- Actively involve students w/ ADHD – e.g., be an aid by writing key words or ideas on the board
- Check student performance (how arrived at solution, state in own words how story character may have felt)
- Delay calling on students (15 seconds, to give student enough time to work out their own answer)
- Identify students who need extra help (ongoing student evaluation, watch for signs of comprehension probs., daydreaming, frustration)
- Help students correct their own mistakes (e.g., check calculations, remind ‘em of diffic. grammar or spelling rules, how to watch out for easy to make errors)
- Help students focus (follow up directions, use learning partners)
- Follow-up directions (additional oral and written instructions, e.g., remind a child to look at the board if forgets the assignment)
- Provide an outline of the lesson for a child with ADHD with key concepts and vocabulary prior to the lesson
- Lower noise level (if too loud, remind of rules/consequences)
- Divide work into smaller units (smaller, less complex tasks)
- Directions are best given one step at a time – if multi-steps, write them down on a card or on the board
- Highlight or underline key points (helps them focus on directions)
- Use colored chalk/markers during lessons to emphasize key words or info.
- Eliminate or reduce frequency of timed tests (reduces test anxiety or unfair timed situations b/c slower processing speed or preoccupation with elapsed time)\
- Use cooperative learning strategies (peer tutoring, work together in small groups to maximize learning)
- Use assistive technology (computers, projector screens makes instruction more visual and encourages active participation)

- Encourage the ADHD student to develop mental images of the concepts or info. being presented – ask them about their images to ensure they are visualizing the key material to be learned
- Varying your word pacing and voice level can increase student focus/attention
- Ensure eye contact of student when giving instruction to improve understanding and follow through of tasks
- Ask the student to paraphrase what you said after giving directions – increases comprehension and allows you to check for understanding
- Concluding Lessons
 - Provide advance warnings that a lesson is about to end (5 or 10 min. warnings re how much time remains, & at start of lesson how much time to complete it)
 - Check assignments (for at least some students – review what learned)
 - Preview the next lesson (transition by informing them by saying what is expected for next activity)

Behavioral Interventions

- (needed b/c kids w/ adhd often may act immaturely & have diffic. learning how to control their impulsiveness & hyperactivity – may have trouble forming friendships & thinking through the social consequences of their actions)
- (use behavioral interventions to make classroom environment conducive to learning)
- (important to view behavioral interventions more as an opportunity for teaching in the most efficient and effective manner, rather than as an opportunity for punishment)
- Verbal Reinforcement of appropriate behavior – (most important and effective)
- **Use praise** – e.g., good job, encourages child to act appropriately
 - Praise often, and BEFORE a child gets off task
 - Define the appropriate behavior while giving praise
 - (be specific for the positive bx displayed by the student – focus on what they did correct and exactly what part(s) of the student’s bx was desirable [e.g., instead of praising for not disturbing the class, praise for quietly completing a math lesson on time])

- Give praise immediately (following a bx – the sooner the approval is given about appropriate bx, the more likely the student will repeat it)
- Vary the statements given as praise (if hear same praise over & over, it may lose its value)
- Be consistent and sincere with praise (avoids confusion for students w/ AD/HD, and students notice when praise is insincere, which makes the praise less effective)
- Praise is more effective than punishment!
 - (negative consequences may temporarily change bx, but they rarely change attitudes & may actually increase the freq. and intensity of inappropriate bx by rewarding with attention)
 - (punishment does not teach students what not to do or give them the skills that are expected)
- Selectively ignore inappropriate behavior (especially when bx is unintentional or unlikely to recur or is intended to get attention but is not disruptive)
- Remove nuisance items (e.g., rubber bands, toys may distract ADHD students – remove after giving student choice of putting it away immediately)
- Provide calming manipulatives (some kids w/ ADHD can benefit from objects that can be manipulated quietly) – can provide sensory input while attending
- Allow for “escape valve” outlets (allow kids w/ ADHD to leave class for a moment – run an errand – can settle them down and allow them to return ready to concentrate)
- Activity reinforcement (encourage them to complete a behavior or activity that is less desired prior to one they prefer)
- Hurdle helping (prevent frustration by offering encouragement, support, and assistance – may enlist the help of a peer)
- Parent conferences (parents as partners in planning for student’s success, get parents’ input in bxl intervention strategies, collaborate in monitoring progress)
- Peer mediation (peers can positively impact the bx of a student with ADHD)
- Use behavioral prompts (reminds students of expectations for their learning & bx in the classroom)

- Visual cues (simple, nonintrusive visual cues to remind student to stay on task, e.g., point w/ eye contact or hold hand, palm down, near child)
- Proximity control (move to where child is when talking to child – helps focus)
- Hand gestures (can communicate privately w/ ADHD student)
- Functional Behavioral Assessment – FBA (understand child’s bx so you can help them self-manage their own bx)
 - (b/c each student’s needs are different and classroom environments & teachers vary as well, it is important to evaluate what practices are appropriate)
 - Functional Behavioral Analysis – systematic process for describing problem behavior & identifying the environmental factors & surrounding events associated with the problem behavior.
 - Observe the behavior and identify/define its problematic characteristics
 - Identify which actions or events precede and follow the behavior
 - Determine how often the behavior occurs
 - Results used to develop an effective and efficient intervention & support plan
- Behavioral contracts and management plans
 - (identify specific academic or behavioral goals for ADHD student, along w/ bx that needs to change and strategies for responding to the inappropriate bx)
- Tangible rewards (use to reinforce appropriate behavior – e.g., stickers, sport team emblems, privileges like extra time on computer or lunch w/ the teacher)
 - Involve the student’s input in the selection of the reward so they are more invested – and vary the reward
- Token economy systems (use to motivate a child to achieve an identified goal within a behavioral contract, often used for entire classroom)
 - E.g., a child can earn points for each homework assignment completed on time and receive a tangible reward like more computer time or a “free” period.
- Self-management systems – train students to monitor and evaluate their own behavior without constant feedback from the teacher
 - (e.g., teacher identifies bxs that will be managed by a student & provides a written scale that includes the performance criteria for each rating – student & teacher separately rate the bx during an activity & compare ratings – student earns points if

the ratings match or are within one point and receives no points if ratings are more than one point apart – points are exchanged for privs – over time teacher involvement is removed & student becomes responsible for self-monitoring)

- CHILDREN W/ ADHD HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS OF LEARNING AND RETAINING INFORMATION
- TEACHERS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE W/ THIS POPULATION BY INDIVIDUALIZING THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES TO FIT WITH THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS IN THEIR DIFFERENT ACADEMIC SUBJECTS (e.g, by using an IEP)
- FOR SPECIFICS IN, FOR EXAMPLE, language arts, reading comprehension, phonics, writing, spelling, handwriting, math computations, SEE - U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (2004). Teaching Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Instructional Strategies and Practices. Education Publications Center.

School Interventions for Children With AD/HD

- **Teenagers** – find a mentor to do 5 minute check-ins periodically throughout the day – go over what is due/assigned, make sure have materials needed for the day/to go home – provide support for the student.

Organizational Skills

- (Very important w/ kids who have AD/HD b/c they are easily distracted & have difficulty sustaining attention and focusing on assigned tasks.)
- (These strategies can help kids w/ ADHD improve their organiz. of h/w or daily assignments)
- Designate one teacher as the student's advisor or coordinator (to regularly review progress as provided by other teachers & act as liason b/w home/school)
- Permit student to meet w/ this advisor regularly (e.g., Mon. A.M., Fri. P.M.) to plan & organize for the week & to review progress & problems from the last week.
- Use Assignment Notebooks (to help organize h/w, seatwork, assign. dates, etc.)

- Provide or encourage the use of color-coded folders or workbooks with dividers and coordinate the colors of the folders with their textbooks (help organize assignments from different academic subjects so s/he can easily find things)
- Work with a homework partner (assign partner to help record h/w & other seatwork in the assignment notebook & file work sheets & other papers in the correct folders)
- Clean out desks & book bags (regularly, wherever completed assignments are stored)
- Use visual aids as reminders of subject material (e.g., banners, charts, pie graphs, lists, diagrams – place them throughout the classroom as a reminder)
- Use graph paper for math problems to help organize numbers and columns
- Allow a few minutes each day for the students to organize their desks, folders, etc.
- Use assignment charts or organizers and have parents sign them daily if needed
- Write daily schedule, homework assignments, long-term due dates and timelines on the board each day
- Provide checklists for ADHD students on their desk or in their notebooks that outlines the steps in following directions or to complete assignments
- CHECK TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE TURNING IN THEIR HOMEWORK (kids w/ AD/HD often do the h/w but are not attending when it is being requested)

Time Management

- (ADHD kids have great difficulty finishing their assignments on time)
- Use a clock or wristwatch (teach child to use them to manage time when completing assigned work)
- Use a calendar (teach child so they can use it to schedule assignments)
- Practice sequencing activities (assist them w/ breaking down long assignments into a sequence of short, interrelated activities)
- Create a daily activity schedule (tape schedule of planned daily activities to the child's desk)

Study Skills

- (Kids w/ ADHD often have diffic. learning to study on their own)

- Adapt worksheets (teach child how to adapt worksheets – e.g., use blank piece of paper to cover up all but one question at a time or fold over to only show one ?)
- Venn diagrams (teach them how to use to help illustrate key concepts)
- Note-taking skills (write down/organize key concepts)
- Checklist of frequent mistakes (provide student w/ list of mistakes s/he frequently makes in certain subjects – e.g., punctuation, capitalization, computation errors – teach the child how to use this list when proofreading his/her work at home/school)
- Checklist of homework supplies (e.g., books, pencils, homework assignment sheets)
- Uncluttered workspace (teach to clear away unnecessary books or other materials before beginning work)
- Monitor homework assignments (keep track, discuss/resolve w/ student & parents any problem in h/w completion)

Classroom Modifications

- (A student with AD/HD may qualify for classroom accommodations that will even the playing field. Examples of accommodations may include:)
- Use tutoring, books on tape, videos, computer use/training;
- Provide preferential seating close to see/hear teacher and away from high traffic areas (allows you to monitor and reinforce behavior);
- Or, seat them near a student role model to help them learn to work cooperatively and learn from their peers;
- Allow extra time on tests or other times assignments
- Give directions that are clear, short, concise – ask student to repeat the directions if s/he looks confused, unsure, or inattentive to ensure comprehension;
- Modify the academic demands;
- Break tasks/instructions into manageable segments w/ breaks whenever possible;
- Check a child’s backpack at the end of the day to make sure they have the necessary materials and homework assignments;
- Allow a hyperactive student to walk to the back of the room every 15 min. or as needed, as long as it is not overly distracting to the rest of the class;

- Pair auditory lessons w/ visual aids, concrete materials, charts, graphs, work sheets;
- Require continuous note taking during lectures/reading – whenever you read, index finger tracks & other hand takes notes, can even draw symbols, idea is that the tablet becomes the child’s working memory – then summarize what you have read w/ a couple sentences;
- Help child develop self-talk, self-monitoring skills;
- Use regular reinforcement and increased structure.

Instructional Tools & Physical Learning Environment

- Pointers – teacher child to use a pointer to help visually track written words (e.g., use a bookmark to help student follow along when students are taking turns reading aloud)
- Egg timers – so child is aware how much time is remaining in a lesson (place them in the front of the room so any students can check how much time remains)
- Classroom lights – turn on/off prompts students that the noise level is too high (can also be used as a signal that it is time to begin preparing for the next lesson)
- Music – recorded music or chords on a piano can prompt students that they are noisy (different types of music can indicate individual vs. group activities)

Curriculum Adjustments

- Establish behavioral control in September – emphasize and post the rules and contingencies, reinforce pro social behavior and consequence or give warnings for rule breaking during the first week (e.g., I know this is a new school year, I just wanted you to know that you broke this rule which normally will lead to this consequence).
- Reduce total workload or give smaller quotas of work at a time (e.g., give 5 problems at a time instead of 30 all at once – this helps reduce the likelihood for the student to feel overwhelmed and increase his or her engagement/compliance).
- Target productivity 1st, accuracy later (reward # of problems attempted) – compliance and initiation of the work is the preliminary issue.
- Give weekly homework instead of daily homework.
- Do not assign multitasks - for multistep activities give the student a 3x5 index card with all steps involved & time period involved.

Peer Tutoring

- Use peer influence, more effective by helping them teach each other, and reverse roles.
- Teach new concepts/skills, give instructions, then break class into dyads.
- Dyads tutor each other, then they quiz each other, then they switch roles and do the same.
- Teacher circulates and supervises/coaches the dyads.
- Dyads are reorganized weekly.

Classroom management strategies

- Allow some restlessness at work area – some movement is ok, part of hyperactivity may be likely to be the student self-stimulating, and may not interfere with their focus.
- Give exercise breaks – increases the dopamine, briefly increasing their concentration.
- Get color-coded binders & book covers – can color code reading – facts, people, etc.
- Use participatory teaching methods – let them do physical movements when possible to become more involved in activities.
- Practice skills drills on computers.
- Post homework at the START of class.
- Assign a homework “study buddy.”
- Do not reinforce impulsiveness (hands raised too quickly) - have students write their answer down before responding and do not call on them until everyone has a chance to write their answer.
- Walking around the room helps gain the student’s attention
- Be more animated, theatrical, and dramatic when possible.
- Use nonverbal cues to get a student’s attention – e.g., a hand on shoulder/wrist, drop paperclip on desk, etc. Have the student help you choose the cue to use so they remember it and are more invested in the process.
- Schedule more difficult subjects in the A.M. – the student is likely at their best, especially if on stimulant medication.
- Use highly structured teaching materials.
- Let the child pick his/her own quota – more likely to do a task if invested.

Increase Incentives in Classroom

- For younger students, use token or point system for rewards – to earn a turn at choosing something from the grab bag (parents send in old games/toys).
- Use video or computer games as a reward.
- Use daily behavior report cards (see Barkley book)
- Use attention trainer or other attentional on-task equipment – these beep, vibrate, etc. and help the student self-monitor his or her level of attention.
- Try team based group rewards.
- Give access to daily rewards when possible – start with more frequent extrinsic rewards and gradually decrease frequency of rewards until rewards become more intrinsic (praise helps in this regard).
- Give more frequent reinforcement for positive behavior than for negative behavior (2:1).
- For younger students, use colored laminated signs for rules to be followed (e.g., red = quiet time, yellow = desk work, green = free play).

Commands

- Heavily praise high compliance initially.
- Use imperatives, not questions.
- Reduce time delays for consequences
- Praise compliance – praise the START of an activity – not the end.
- Reprimands must be “prudent” – brief, clear, statements to start or stop a specific behavior, delivered immediately after the behavior, not delayed, and said in an unemotional, neutral tone of voice. (aim for 4 positives for every 1 negative comment).
- Reward throughout task, if possible, grab bag of surprises (e.g., every 3rd command get to pick out of the grab bag, but then vary it –like slot machines, a variable-ratio reinforcement schedule).
- Rewards must be carefully picked to be salient to a student with AD/HD, as they tend to require more frequent rewards, and satiate more quickly on the same rewards – variety is important.

Token systems

- If between age 5 and 7, use physical tokens – hashmarks or points are too symbolic/higher order for this age.
- List as many rewards as possible (make ½ or more available daily).
- Give bonus points for having a positive attitude.
- Use rewards for the list of weekly/daily jobs or to target pro social behavior.
- Assign point values based on the effort required for the task or the amount of resistance
- Use bigger values for older kids (give 100 or 1000 points versus 10 points for a task).

Counselors/Social Workers

- They have a unique window of influencing (or not) parents to seek additional help for their kids.
- Important intervention – give parents feedback about their children so they see the need for outside help.
- Try to stay behavioral – describe the behavior and avoid labels – reduce parent defensiveness.
- As you know, parents are often on guard for implications of medication – if you think a medical or psychological evaluation is needed, explain the impairment in behavioral terms that they can understand – if you think more intensive therapy is needed – describe the need in terms of potential goals so the student can function better in school.
- Assist with 504 plans, IEPs, and care teams by giving information about your unique experience with the student (e.g., some demands might be too great given the student’s emotional or behavioral disturbance).
- Help support the student, validate the student, and help the student feel good about him/herself.
- The student needs to process frustration with academic demands and help with organization.
- Set up mentor for A.M. and P.M. 5 minute check ins (homework & test assignments, materials)

- Assist w/ teaching the student to advocate for him/herself – these skills are desperately needed in college – assertively communicate with teacher about needs – e.g., student says or writes letter to teacher, “What really helps is when you...” “What doesn’t help is when you...” “I need...”
- Letter to Teacher (from parent/child) – see article on this on aboutourkids.com website