

ADHD Community

50 Tips on the Classroom Management of ADD

Written by Drs. Ned Hallowell & John Ratey

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Teachers know what many professionals do not: that there is no one syndrome of ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) but many; that ADD rarely occurs in "pure" form by itself, but rather it usually shows up entangled with several other problems such as learning disabilities or mood problems; that the face of ADD changes with the weather, inconstant and unpredictable; and that the treatment for ADD, despite what may be serenely elucidated in various texts, remains a task of hard work and devotion. There is no easy solution for the management of ADD in the classroom, or at home for that matter. After all is said and done, the effectiveness of any treatment for this disorder at school depends upon the knowledge and persistence of the school and the individual teacher.

Here are a few tips on the school management of the child with ADD. The following suggestions are intended for teachers in the classroom, teachers of children of all ages. Some suggestions will be obviously more appropriate for younger children, others for older, but the unifying themes of structure, education, and encouragement pertain to all.



- First of all, make sure what you are dealing with really is ADD. It is definitely not up to the teacher to diagnose ADD, but you can and should raise questions. Specifically, make sure someone has tested the child's hearing and vision recently, and make sure other medical problems have been ruled out. Make sure an adequate evaluation has been done. Keep questioning until you are convinced. The responsibility for seeing to all of this is the parents, not the teacher's but the teacher can support the process.
- Second, build your support. Being a teacher in a classroom where there are two or three kids with ADD can be extremely tiring. Make sure you have the support of the school and the parents. Make sure there is a knowledgeable person with whom you can consult when you have a problem (learning specialist, child psychiatrist, social worker, school psychologist, pediatrician - the person's degree doesn't really matter. What matters is that he or she knows lots about ADD, has seen lots of kids with ADD, knows his or her way around a classroom, and can speak plainly.) Make sure the parents are working with you. Make sure your colleagues can help you out.

- Third, know your limits. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You, as a teacher, cannot be expected to be an expert on ADD. You should feel comfortable in asking for help when you feel you need it.
- ASK THE CHILD WHAT WILL HELP. These kids are often very intuitive. They can tell you how they can learn best if you ask them. They are often too embarrassed to volunteer the information because it can be rather eccentric. But try to sit down with the child individually and ask how he or she learns best. By far the best "expert" on the how the child learns best is the child himself or herself. It is amazing how often their opinions are ignored or not asked for. In addition, especially with older kids, make sure the child understands what ADD is. This will help both of you a lot.

Having taken 1 - 4 into account, try the following:

- Remember that ADD kids need structure. They need their environment to structure externally what they can't structure internally on their own. Make lists. Children with ADD benefit greatly from having a table or list to refer back to when they get lost in what they're doing. They need reminders. They need previews. They need repetition. They need direction. They need limits. They need structure.
- REMEMBER THE EMOTIONAL PART OF LEARNING. These children need special help in finding enjoyment in the classroom, mastery instead of failure and frustration, excitement instead of boredom or fear. It is essential to pay attention to the emotions involved in the learning process.
- Post rules. Have them written down and in full view. The children will be reassured by knowing what is expected of them.
- Repeat directions. Write down directions. Speak directions. Repeat directions. People with ADD need to hear things more than once.
- Make frequent eye contact. You can "bring back" an ADD child with eye contact. Do it often. A glance can retrieve a child from a daydream or give permission to ask a question or just give silent reassurance.
- Seat the ADD child near your desk or wherever you are most of the time. This helps stave off the drifting away that so bedevils these children.
- Set limits, boundaries. This is containing and soothing, not punitive. Do it consistently, predictably, promptly, and plainly. DON'T get into complicated, lawyer-like discussions of fairness. These long discussions are just a diversion. Take charge.
- Have as predictable a schedule as possible. Post it on the blackboard or the child's desk. Refer to it often. If you are going to vary it, as most interesting teachers do, give lots of warning and preparation. Transitions and unannounced changes are very difficult for these children. They become discombobulated around them. Take special care to prepare for transitions will in advance. Announce what is going to happen, then give repeat warnings as the time approaches.
- Try to help the kids make their own schedules for after school in an effort to avoid one of the hallmarks of ADD: procrastination.
- Eliminate or reduce frequency of times tests. There is no great educational value to timed tests, and they definitely do not allow many children with ADD to show what they know.
- Allow for escape valve outlets such as leaving class for a moment. If this can be built into the rules of the classroom, it will allow the child to leave the room rather than "lose it," and in so doing begin to learn important tools of self-observation and self-modulation.
- Go for quality rather than quantity of homework. Children with ADD often need a reduced load. As long as they are learning the concepts, they should be allowed this. They will put in the same amount of study time, just not bet buried under more than they can

handle.

- Monitor progress often. Children with ADD benefit greatly from frequent feedback. it helps keep them on track, lets them know what is expected of them and if they are meeting their goals, and can be very encouraging.

reviewed by:

Harry Croft, MD (Psychiatrist)

Medical Director, HealthyPlace.com

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