

Tips for Teachers

(From ____?____ publication)

Whether you knew it or not, you've probably had children with ADHD in your class before. They're the ones who can't seem to keep still, who answer questions without raising their hands, who talk when they should be listening. They're the daydreamers and the "class clowns." They're the ones who often forget their homework or turn in incomplete assignments. Of course, any child can do a few of these things and not have ADHD. Children with ADHD, on the other hand, may do all of them.

Teaching children with ADHD can be very challenging and very frustrating. But, with a better understanding of ADHD and a few "tricks," you can help your students with ADHD to increase their successes in the classroom. You can also cut down on the amount of disruptive behavior that is common with these children. Try the following suggestions with your students who have ADHD:

- **Realize that children with ADHD are just as intelligent and creative as the other children in your class.** Children with ADHD are often highly intelligent, but they do have trouble organizing and processing information. They may also have a difficult time sitting still and paying attention, so they miss the main point of the lesson.
- **Avoid using negative labels.** Many children with ADHD are underachievers. As a result, they are often mislabeled as "lazy" or "unmotivated." It's important to distinguish inattentiveness from lack of motivation.
- **Encourage participation.** Children with ADHD can be enthusiastic about learning. Give them opportunities to help and participate actively in the classroom.
- **Separate work into small chunks.** Children can complete each task and then move on to the next one without getting confused. This approach also gives children a sense of accomplishment.
- **Experiment to find the best seating location,** in order to cut down on visual distractions. For example, seat the child near the front of the room and away from the window.
- **Write assignments on the board.** In addition to giving verbal assignments, be sure to write them on the board or hand them out in written form. Break complex assignments into smaller steps.
- **Suggest homework notebooks or accordion folders** for children with ADHD. When children put their assignments in the same place each time, they have less chance of losing them or forgetting the details.
- **Encourage students to ask for clarification** if they don't understand a concept or rule, or if they are confused about directions. Children should feel comfortable asking for help.

- **Allow students with ADHD extra time for tests.** They may also need to take tests in a supervised place that is free from distractions.
- **Give rewards often while the child is on task.** For younger children, these rewards can be a sticker, a privilege, or verbal praise. For most older students, your quiet recognition of a job well done can be motivating, yet not embarrassing.
- **Talk about your students' good points.** Children with ADHD need a lot of encouragement and self-esteem boosters.
- **Use multi-media materials to engage students' interest and attention.** These materials can be audio- or videotapes, calculators, computers, games, costumes, or memory joggers.
- **Allow your students with ADHD to use alternative ways of sharing information.** Students who have trouble with written assignments could be encouraged to use a word processor, share information orally, or dictate their answers on audiocassette tape.
- **Build in times to get up and move around.** Children with ADHD need to move. Every chance they have to release energy-without getting into trouble-will help them settle in for the next task. A trip to the library, a walk outside to look at the spring buds, a chance to act out a story, or to stand up while working on assignments-wherever you can combine learning with movement, you'll be doing these children a big favor.
- **Teach the child to monitor his or her own level of "on-task" behavior.**
- **Prepare students with ADHD for transitional times and changes in routine.** Children with ADHD handle transitions and changes much better when they know about them ahead of time. Let your students know when a change will happen, why, and what they can expect.
- **Try to remain calm,** even when the child's behavior is very disruptive. High-risk times for these children tend to be unstructured period like lunch and recess. Try to plan ahead for problem situations, and keep your cool.
- **Identify one or two negative behaviors to work on at a time.** Trying to work on too many things at once will only confuse the child. Focus on teaching desirable behaviors, rather than eliminating undesirable ones.
- **Share positive observations about the child's behavior,** along with your concerns, when communicating with parents.