

Ask the Expert

Webcast Chat Series

Presented by the
National Resource Center on ADHD



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Ask the Expert

Preparing for a New School Year: Helping Children with ADHD Use Effective Homework, Organization, and Planning Skills



Joshua M. Langberg, PhD

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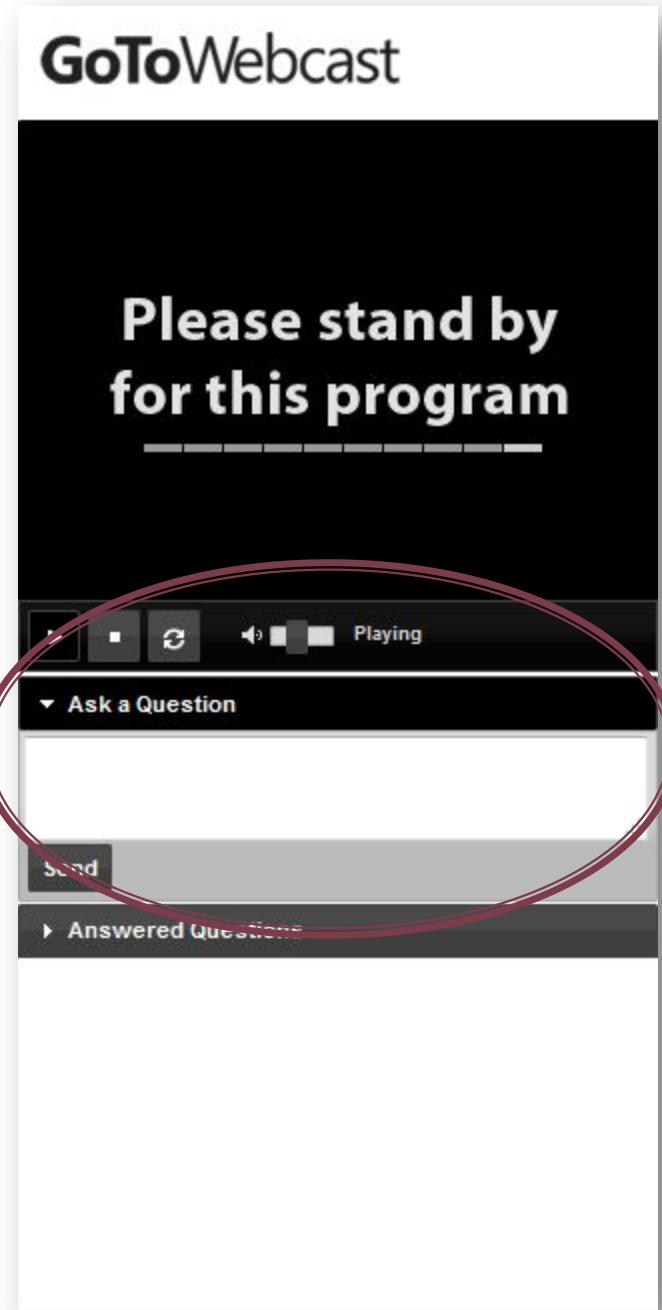
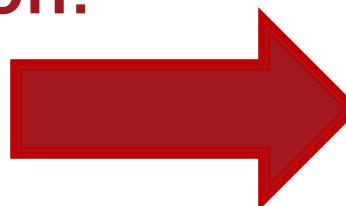
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To Ask A Question:





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Why Homework and Organization?

- ▶ On average, students with ADHD complete around 10 – 15% fewer homework assignments in comparison to their peers each semester
- ▶ Homework completion problems are stable across time
- ▶ Parent ratings of homework materials management abilities in elementary school predicts GPA in adolescence (high school age) above and beyond the impact of intelligence and service use (e.g., ADHD medication use and school services).

ADHD in School

- ▶ Reward sensitivity
 - Long-term versus short-term immediately available “rewards”
- ▶ If immediate “rewards” (e.g., positive feedback/attention) are not available, child will often seek them out (even if negative)
- ▶ Environment/school is set-up exact opposite
 - Slow pace, planning, delayed reinforcement, infrequent feedback and often only feedback for negative behaviors
 - From an immediately available rewards perspective – why would a child record homework or to take the time to organize their bookbag?
- ▶ We need to find a way to provide frequent/immediate feedback for positive academic behaviors in order to counter this

Strategies

- ▶ Focus on telling child what do to instead of what not to do and specifically define what we want to see
- ▶ This is a reframe – provides them with opportunity to succeed rather than waiting for them to fail
- ▶ Going for a 3-to-1 ratio
- ▶ Remember the context
 - Children with ADHD typically approach any new “system” with pessimism
 - Have had repeated failure experiences
 - This needs to be different (a positive experience) to gain buy-in

Picking Target Behaviors

- ▶ Need to identify one or two specific behaviors initially
- ▶ Children with ADHD respond to “behavioral” treatments
- ▶ What does this mean? (talking and explaining doesn’t work)
- ▶ Main principles of behavioral treatment is that a specific behavior gets defined, monitored consistently, and is associated with positive feedback that is as frequent and immediate as possible
- ▶ Can be very difficult to monitor multiple behaviors frequently and consistently
- ▶ Better to start off with 1 and add over time because if monitoring is inconsistent, child learns the “wrong” lesson and unfortunately, that lesson may confirm their prior experience
 - Patience is probably hardest part

THE HOMEWORK COMPLETION CYCLE

- Teacher assigns work to be completed
- Student records assignments accurately and in sufficient detail
- Student ensures all materials needed to complete work are brought home
- Student plans for the completion of homework and studying for tests
- Student manages time after school effectively
- Student physically completes work and ensures that it is accurate
- Student ensures that materials and assignments are brought back to school
- Student turns in homework assignment

Setting Specific and Realistic Goals

- ▶ Be specific:
 - What does organization mean? What does planning ahead mean? What does studying for 20 minutes mean?
 - Agree upon the specifics ahead of time
- ▶ Realistic initial goals:
 - Assume child is waiting to fail
 - Children learn to avoid trying so that they don't have to fail
 - To gain buy-in need to start small
 - *Want to almost guarantee success*
 - Goal is to gradually shape behavior

Monitoring and Rewarding

- ▶ Once behavior and goals have been defined the questions remaining are:
 - Who is going to monitor the behavior?
 - How frequently is the behavior going to be monitored?
 - What type of immediate positive feedback/reward is the child going to receive?
- ▶ As general principle, the more frequent the monitoring and rewarding the better
 - More opportunities for success
 - Opportunities to get back on-track (avoid long-term consequences)
 - Counteracting naturally available immediate reinforcements

Rewards

- ▶ Definition of rewards is often very narrow
 - Videogame, new bike, money
- ▶ Rewards are available naturally
- ▶ Paychecks, praise, positive attention from parents or peers
- ▶ For homework and classroom behaviors rewards are already available naturally for “negative” behavior
 - If I say I have no homework I get to go outside
 - If I don’t write down homework I get to talk in the hall with my peers
 - If I act out in class I get attention from my peers
- ▶ Long-term rewards are not effective for children with ADHD because they cannot compete with the saliency of naturally available short-term immediate rewards

Rewards

- ▶ May want to start with praise and attention
- ▶ Daily privilege based rewards and point systems are also good options
- ▶ Consider reward menus based upon varying levels of points
- ▶ Get creative
 - Later bedtime, not eat one food on plate, 20 minutes extra of videogames, 10 minutes throwing football, pick dinner, not comb hair before school, extra books before bed, extra phone time.

Example Reward Menu

Reward	Point Value
20 extra minutes of video game time	2
20 extra minutes of TV time	2
Go to bed 20 minutes later	2
Rent and watch a movie	8
Receive money to go to the movies with friends	12
Pick the place for family dinner out	8
Go bowling with Dad	12

Homework Recording

- ▶ Moving around the homework completion cycle
- ▶ Reasons to target homework recording first:
 - Parent has no other way of gathering information
 - Daily arguments/battles over what was assigned
- ▶ Tell the child what to do
- ▶ Record homework in the planner
 - What does this mean?
- ▶ Write something in each core class space
 - OK (realistic) but ensure it is really what you want

Homework Recording

- ▶ Define exactly what we want to see in the planner
 - Homework is recorded so that parent can read and could independently determine what to do
 - Upcoming tests and quizzes are recorded in the planner on the day that they will occur.
 - A time to study for a test is designated and recorded
 - A study method (or study task) is described and recorded
 - Write “No homework” if there is none

Homework Recording

- ▶ Planner checked/monitored daily after school
- ▶ Point totals depend on what is recorded
 - 1 point for each assignment recorded in sufficient detail (including writing no homework)
 - 1 point for each test/quiz recorded
 - 2 points for designating a time to study
 - 2 points for specifying how studying will occur
- ▶ Note that points earned can be any amount, depends entirely on values of items on reward menu

Organization of Materials

- ▶ Tell the child *what to do*
 - Bring binder home everyday regardless of homework
 - No loose papers in bookbag
 - All homework papers are located in the homework folder
 - All completed papers filed in appropriate section of the binder
- ▶ Monitoring
 - Once or twice per week is typically sufficient
 - Develop self-management plan to help ensure that the child is successful

Parent Organization Checklist

	10/2	10/5	10/8	10/11	10/14	10/17
There are no loose papers in the binder.	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO
There are no loose papers in the bookbag.	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO
Homework to be completed is in the left side of the homework folder.	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO
Homework to be turned in is in the right side of the homework folder.	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO
Only current homework papers are in the homework folder.	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO
Only papers that the child still needs are in the binder.	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO
Total organization points earned today						
Total organization points earned overall (bank)						

Self-Management Plan

- ▶ “I want to make sure that you earn these points. I know it is nearly impossible to keep everything organized all the time because you have such little time in-between classes. When would you like for me to check your bookbag and binder? I want to check right after you have had a chance to clean it up so that you get all the points.”
- ▶ Child can organize right after school or, on Saturday/Sunday
- ▶ Decide if parent will remind child or not and how many times (no nagging allowed)
- ▶ Create visual prompts to help child (and parent) remember



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More Information – *Improving Children’s Homework, Organization, and Planning Skills*
NASP Publications:

<http://www.nasponline.org/publications/booksproducts/N1412.aspx>

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